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# SELECT PIECES

IN

VERSE AND PROSE,

BY

THE LATE JOHN BOWDLER, JUN. ESQ.

OF LINCOLN'S INN, BARRISTER AT LAW.

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FOURTH EDITION.

**VOL. II.**

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“ A CHRISTIAN is the highest stile of Man.”—*Young.*

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# SELECT PIECES

*IN PROSE.*

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A REVIEW OF MR. DUGALD STEWART'S  
PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS.

IT is now about twenty years since Mr. Stewart gave to the world his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*; a work which is already established among the classics of the country; and which, whether we consider the originality of many of the truths contained in it, the justness and scientific arrangement of the observations, which are not strictly original, or the elegance of its composition, is entitled to be classed among the most valuable productions which we possess in philosophy and literature. It was intended by the author, as the first part of a systematic inquiry into the nature of man, contemplated as an intellectual being, or moral agent, and a member of political society. Mr. Stewart complains, in the earlier parts of that publication, that the proper objects of metaphysical investigation had been, in general, much mistaken, and the progress of the science proportionably re-

tarded;—that philosophers had been chiefly employed in controversies concerning the origin of our knowledge, while the steady contemplation of the known powers and affections of the human mind had been little attended to;—and that the only true way to render this important science of practical value to men, or to make real advances in it, must be, as in physics, to collect carefully the phenomena which belong to it, and build upon them a system of general principles; observing rigidly, through the whole process, the same laws of induction which have long been universally recognized in the sister science. Acting upon this view of things, the justness of which we think it impossible to controvert, Mr. Stewart in the work alluded to, after some very acute and valuable observations on the nature of our perceptions, and the essential difficulties which will probably for ever attend our inquiries respecting them, proceeds to take a general survey of the faculties of the human understanding; and the greater part of the volume is occupied with observations and reasonings upon the powers of Attention, Conception, Abstraction, Association, Memory, and Imagination. All the chapters upon these subjects, but particularly those upon Attention and Conception, contain much that is new and valuable; and what is not entitled to the praise of originality, may generally claim that of correctness and elegance. The plan of Mr. Stewart's work entitles him to be considered as original in a degree to which few authors can lay claim; for, though much of the ma-

terials which he digested was undoubtedly drawn from metaphysical writers who preceded him, none of them, except perhaps Mr. Locke, (whose great work, however, is not very orderly,) employed the facts, of which they were in possession, in such a manner as could tend, in any considerable measure, to the advancement of the science ; having been generally content to adduce them for the purpose of supporting some hypothesis respecting the origin of our knowledge;—(a question rather curious than useful;) and having, for the most part, neglected to combine and extend them, for the purpose of shewing the nature, the proper application of, and the best means of improving, the faculties of man ; which ought to be the main objects of metaphysical investigations, and are perhaps those which can alone be strictly termed practical.

The Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind were intended, as we have already mentioned, as the commencement of a course of inquiries into subjects of a very extensive and interesting nature. But “art is long, and life is short.” In this “land of shadows,” even those who seem to be the least exposed to the varieties of fortune, too often find their leisure consumed by avocations which they cannot forbid, and saddened with sorrows which they had no power to anticipate. Twenty years are elapsed, and the projects which were conceived by Mr. Stewart, not in the eagerness of youth, but in the maturity and experience of riper years, still remain unaccomplished ; and this justly celebrated writer

may perhaps, after all his efforts, add one to the number of the many great and wise men, who have indulged and awakened expectations which the vicissitude of human things never allowed them to fulfil. In this, however, he differs from most others, that even at the time of expressing his hopes, he had the wisdom to anticipate the possibility of their failure. May the tranquillity of his future years enable him to prove, what none who justly estimate his works can doubt, that the fulfilment of his projects has been retarded by no disproportion between his talents and his designs, but by that wise economy of things, which has provided, that, in this imperfect state, even the highest intellectual endowments shall seldom be allowed to produce their full effect.

In the mean time, and still, as he informs us, intent on the prosecution of his great work, Mr. Stewart has presented to the public a volume of Essays on subjects intimately connected with his favourite studies. Of these we are now to give some account. They were written, the author tells us, during an interval of ill-health, which disqualified him from severer labours; like Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, "in the time of his languishment:" but there are probably few persons whose full vigour would have been sufficient for the production of such a volume; and certainly none, whose years of health and strength had not been assiduously devoted to the cultivation of science and letters.

The Essays before us are preceded by a Prelimi-

nary Dissertation, which is divided into two chapters. In the first of these the writer offers some strictures on the hypothetical systems in metaphysics, for which some of the followers of Hartley and Priestley have, since the appearance of his former work, claimed the public approbation; and defends, with a little warmth, that more cautious process of observation and induction which he had formerly recommended, and himself steadily pursued. There is no doubt, we believe, now entertained by judicious scholars, that the scheme of investigation adopted by Mr. Stewart is as sound and unquestionable in metaphysical researches, as in all the branches of natural science. Of the theories of the Hartleian school we shall have occasion to say more hereafter.

The second chapter, in the Preliminary Dissertation, is employed upon a question, which we have always thought interesting, and which is now rendered more so by the character of the disputants. Mr. Stewart, in some early chapters of his former work, expatiated pretty largely on the benefits which might be expected to result from a just view and assiduous cultivation of the metaphysics. It is natural for an author to be partial to his own pursuits. But the philosophers of the north are sceptical. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, in one of the early numbers, controverted this opinion, and insisted on the inutility of metaphysical knowledge for practical purposes. The sum of his argument is, that the proper use of knowledge being to increase the power of man, a science of which the phenomena are *observed*,



but not *discovered*, can be of little service to that end: that in physics a great variety of new facts are obtained by skilful experiments; but that in metaphysics the most accurate inquirer can only notice what has been, from time immemorial, open to the view of all who were disposed to examine: that it is, therefore, highly improbable that new phenomena should now be discovered; and though an able philosopher may classify more skilfully what is already known, and perhaps have sagacity enough to point out inferences not immediately obvious, he can add nothing new to the facts of the science; and even his results will generally be found to have been anticipated by the practical good sense of mankind; who know perfectly well (for example) how memory depends upon attention, and is assisted by association, without any elaborate inquiry into the nature of the human faculties.

The argument, of which we have here presented the substance, is expanded and enforced by its author with considerable ability, and Mr. Stewart has judged it worthy of a pretty large examination. He denies, in the first place, that there is any essential difference between physical and metaphysical science, as to the manner of collecting the data properly belonging to each. Berkley's theory of vision, he observes, is "at least an attempt towards an experimental decomposition of our perceptions: and the whole of a philosopher's life, if he spends it to any purpose, is one continued series of experiments on his own faculties and powers." Even with re-



spect to the distinction attempted to be made between experiment and observation, he insists that it is, in truth, little more than nominal ; that in the anatomy of the body, as in the anatomy of the mind, facts are obtained solely by accurate observations, yet no one ever doubted the usefulness of that study ; and that, as the whole science of astronomy evidently falls within the scope of the Reviewer's remarks, his arguments, if they possess any force, tend to depreciate a large department of physics equally with the science of mind. In reply to some instances, adduced to shew that men who never studied the philosophy of mind have sufficient practical acquaintance with the relation subsisting between its faculties, Mr. Stewart observes, that a considerable proportion of the most important theorems upon motion, the centre of gravity, the composition of forces, and other mathematical truths, are solved by every savage who feathers his arrow or loads it, or trains his horse to particular exercises ; and on the whole, he insists, in a series of arguments and illustrations, through which we have not space sufficient to follow him, that he is sanctioned by the justest views of the probable progress of philosophy, in re-affirming the beneficial tendency of the studies to which the best years of his life have been devoted.

To this chapter the Edinburgh Reviewers have rejoined, and defended their original positions with some eagerness ; but, we think, they have left the question about where they found it.

Upon the principal subject in debate, which respects the utility or unprofitableness of metaphysical studies, we concur, in the main, with Mr. Stewart; yet we are far from thinking that there is absolutely nothing in what is urged on the other side. When the Reviewer says broadly, that *in metaphysics certainly knowledge is not power*, we have no hesitation in saying, that *certainly* he is wrong. There can be no doubt that a knowledge of the connection between the different faculties of the mind, may, in many cases, enable us to devise methods for managing them skilfully:—an intimate acquaintance with the nature and extent of associations is of great value in education: and it seems even probable, that, in the progress of the science, some lights may be obtained for the assistance of those who may suffer an accidental injury in any of their senses, or who labour under the very common and very afflicting disorders of the judgment or imagination. Still, it is impossible to contend that knowledge is power, to the same extent in metaphysics, as in natural science; and though, when facts are once procured, it matters little whether they were obtained by means of observation or experiment, it cannot be denied that the more experiments we can make, the more chances we have of discovering phenomena, and that, in the nature of things, experiments are far more conveniently made upon matter than upon mind.

But we think that Mr. Stewart has permitted his opponents to narrow too much the grounds on

which the defence of metaphysical studies may be rested. Some knowledge, to be sure, is power; perhaps, in a sense, all knowledge is so: but knowledge is not merely power, nor can its value be fairly measured only by this rule. Many branches of inquiry well deserve the attention of every inquisitive understanding; many have a tendency to fortify the mind, or to enlarge, or to adorn it; many contribute to the sources of elegant and harmless amusement, which have only a very remote effect in increasing the powers of man, even upon the largest meaning that can be given to that expression. Nor is it in any manner an objection to the philosophy of mind, that it is less useful than physical inquiries. Different branches of knowledge are doubtless of different values, sometimes in the nature of things, sometimes in relation to certain individuals or to particular objects; but any science is worthy of cultivation, which is likely to be of some use to many persons, or of much use even to a few. What is ordinarily unprofitable should not be generally pursued; what is essentially frivolous should be universally neglected; but in the different branches of real knowledge, we must permit men to choose pretty freely, as their interests, or opportunities, or tastes, may direct them; and, among these, we are inclined to think the metaphysical studies entitled to occupy a very respectable station.

Many worthy men entertain, indeed, strong prejudices against these pursuits; but let it be recollected, that reflective understandings are naturally

metaphysical. It happens, we believe, to almost every man of a vigorous intellect, at some period of his life, and generally very early, to feel considerable curiosity respecting the nature of his faculties, and the modes of exercising them; to arrest the progress of his thoughts, for the purpose of contemplating them more accurately: to consider, with some anxiety, the manner of his existence; what it is he means when he speaks of his ideas, thoughts, sentiments; what life is; what is death; what time, what eternity; what space, and matter, and motion? Good men, who discern, or who fancy they discern, the dangers attending such speculations, may warn the young and inquisitive; but it is impossible for those who have a glimpse of light to rest contentedly in darkness; and surely it is more rational fairly to ascertain, by a well-directed course of inquiry, what can be known respecting these things, and what must remain hidden, than to suffer the mind to run out into every sort of vagrant theory, or sink, after a few excursions, into that senseless scepticism which is really the refuge of indolence, not the resting place of manly thought and candid investigation.

It is not enough considered, how useful it is for us to be acquainted with the real limits of our knowledge. A celebrated French writer\* thought he

\* Mons. Voltaire.—It has been the fashion of late, with the Edinburgh Reviewers, when this name is mentioned, to couple it with “*the great*,” “*the illustrious*,” or some such high-sounding epithet. We really think this not in very good taste. There is an appearance of a little sectarian eagerness, in such a



paid a high compliment to Mr. Locke, in saying that "he was the Hercules who had fixed the boundaries of the human understanding." Surely it is something, indeed it is by no means a little matter, that we are no longer in danger of straining our faculties, and wasting our time, in researches respecting general essences, substantial forms, and the like unintelligible jargon. In common life, and conversation also, not to say in books, how many foolish sentences, which are thought wise by those who utter them, would be saved, if men were more generally persuaded, that, when they talk of abstract ideas, they use words without a meaning; that, superabundance of encomium. Voltaire was justly eminent as a poet and a wit; he was an entertaining historian; and as far as his philosophy extended, (for he was not profound in any science, though he had an insight into all,) he was sound and clear-headed. The vivacity of his parts, and variety of his attainments, entitle him to be considered as an extraordinary man; but it is very questionable whether he deserves the character of a great man. The unjust treatment he experienced in early life is some excuse for his prejudices against religion during that period; but what apology can be offered for the miserable and devoted fury with which he persecuted Christianity during all his later years? Or what shall we say of the temper, wisdom, and enlargement of a philosopher, who could see no distinction between the blind bigotry of a popish establishment, and that pure, practical, and benign spirit which breathes through every page of the New Testament? If Voltaire had shewn half the ignorance and temerity in any branch of philosophical discussion, with which his strictures on the Holy Scriptures are justly chargeable, we suspect the votes of our northern brethren would have been more divided than they appear to be, respecting his merits.

when they speak of images impressed on the sensorium, they neither understand themselves, nor enable any body else to understand them; and that, though they should dispute about mind and matter from the cock-crow till the curfew, they have not, in reality, the least acquaintance with the one or the other. These things, and many like them, have been taught us by the men who have inquired into the origin of our knowledge, the least useful part unquestionably of metaphysical science; yet, unprofitable as it now appears to us, so curious and inviting as to have attracted the full attention of some of the most powerful understandings that have appeared in modern Europe.

But the advantages which belong to the study of the philosophy of the mind, are not merely negative. Not to mention the hints that have been obtained from the researches of metaphysicians for the judicious management of the understanding, and the more perfect lights which may be anticipated from their future labours, this science borders so closely upon others of the most unquestionable importance, that some insight into it seems necessary for the perfect understanding of subjects which nobody thinks himself at liberty to despise. Its connection with physics is so close, that the ancient writers classed them together, or rather, considered the philosophy of mind as a part of the philosophy of nature. Of philology at least one half, and that the most important half, is strictly metaphysical. In morals the case is so nearly similar, that a man

might as reasonably entitle himself a learned physician though he had never studied anatomy, as esteem himself an adept in moral science without having obtained an intimate acquaintance with the affections, passions, and sentiments of the human heart. Indeed, all moral writers *must* be, in a greater or less degree, metaphysical ; though, to be sure, it must be owned that all metaphysical writers have not been very moral. Politics, which profess to regard only the external condition of mankind, have perhaps less connection with inquiries concerning the mind, than the sciences already mentioned ; yet every body has doubtless heard of political metaphysics : and though we should have no objection to admit that the questions in that department which have occasioned the most eager controversies are, for the most part, frivolous ; yet, so long as there are foolish men who will insist upon discussing them, it is exceedingly proper that there should be wise men sufficiently prepared to discuss them also. Lastly, in theology, the most important and interesting of all studies to an immortal and accountable being, who is there that is not sensible of the value of metaphysical knowledge in conducting us through the great questions of predestination, election, and free agency ? What violence have some Calvinistic divines done to the common sense and feelings of mankind, what perilous approaches to practical Antinomianism have they sometimes made, in the stiff, unqualified, and really unphilosophical statement of their favourite doctrines ! What mere



verbal frivolities, what contradictory propositions, and, sometimes, what dangerous errors and heresies have some Arminian writers fallen into, from their ignorance of the difficulties which unquestionably embarrass their tenets respecting the will.

There is another view in which the value of the metaphysics deserves to be considered; we mean, in respect of the discipline they afford to the understanding. In the English universities, the certain sciences are those which alone have been employed in the institution of youth. In a neighbouring realm, young minds are exercised chiefly in morals, politics, public law, and metaphysics. Far be from us the presumption of deciding which of the two schemes is the most successful; but we have no doubt at all which is, in its principle, the most reasonable. The great objects in the instruction of young persons, so far, at least as intellectual cultivation is regarded, and we suspect even a little further, are, to form their minds to habits of thought at once bold and cautious, patient and discursive; to teach them that the memory is to be the handmaid of the understanding, not the mistress; to instil an ardent curiosity and thirst of knowledge, yet to accustom them at the same time to estimate their progress rather by the value and accuracy, than by the apparent extent of their acquirements. For these purposes, perhaps for every purpose of intellectual institution, those sciences in which the evidence is only probable, possess manifest advantages over those in which it is demonstrative; and, among

the former, none are better fitted to discipline the understanding than the metaphysics. The subjects which they present for examination are exactly those about which the mind is apt to be curious, at a time when its curiosity is unprejudiced, before it has received a particular direction from worldly interests and habits. They are neither, like geometrical studies, so perfectly abstruse as to connect themselves very rarely with the practical pursuits of life; nor, like political inquiries, apt to become vulgar and unscientific from a multitude of local details and temporary interest. They form, beyond all other sciences, reflective habits of mind. In other pursuits, these are for the most part exercised only in forming general conclusions; but in the metaphysics the whole process is reflective. Reflection is requisite for observing the phenomena on which we are to reason: it is requisite for separating, comparing, and combining them; it is requisite ultimately for ascertaining the laws to which they are subjected. To all this must be added, that while other sciences require a considerable apparatus of books, and opportunities of general information, the metaphysician carries the materials of his art constantly about with him. They are perpetually present and ready for his use; "*pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur;*" and the most vulgar incidents of life, which only distract the thoughts of other speculators, furnish to him not unfrequently occasions for examining anew the principles he has

established, and supply hints for their enlargement, illustration, or correction.

The considerations last mentioned are nearly allied to others of still higher importance. A branch of the metaphysics (as we have already observed) borders upon ethics, and embraces the study of those internal principles which evidently are of a moral nature. Such are love, compassion, sympathy, generosity, gratitude, courage, and the like. Surely if self-discipline be important, and if man possesses in any degree the power of directing or regulating his own emotions, that science cannot be useless which introduces us to a more perfect acquaintance with ourselves; which lays open to us the very springs of action; which discloses not merely the full-grown thought or inclination, but the secret cell where its seed was deposited, the soil where it began to germinate, the neighbouring affections to which its young fibres first attached themselves, and from whence, perhaps, they drew their chief nutriment. It is principally on this account that almost all the best practical writers on religion have been metaphysical. They are not satisfied to shew what is the meaning or what the extent of any precept; but they endeavour to trace the avenues by which it may be conducted to the recesses of the heart, and to detect the principles of our nature to which it has the nearest alliance, or from which the most obstinate hostility may be expected. Any one may satisfy himself of the truth of this, by opening at hazard

the practical works of Baxter, Owen, Leighton, Watts, Witherspoon, Edwards, and reading on for a few pages. Many a pious man, who has been accustomed to run on against metaphysics with more zeal than knowledge, might undoubtedly be convicted (to his great surprise) of being himself pretty deep in that science; which he would be found to have studied through a large part of his life, not indeed very systematically, but to a much better purpose than a considerable majority of those who have written upon it the most abstrusely. Many pious persons might also be found, who, in part at least, for want of that knowledge which metaphysics would have given, deceive themselves in many things of great practical importance; are insensible to the growth of the most dangerous associations; mistake the real sources of their errors in conduct; confound the more amiable natural dispositions with the evidences and fruits of sanctification: or remain insensible to dormant principles of sin, (which they might have discovered and mortified,) till a powerful temptation draws them forth to a terrible and fatal activity.

These are some of the advantages which may fairly be considered as belonging to the cultivation of those studies which are commonly called metaphysical. To all this, and to whatever else has by different writers been urged in favour of such pursuits, the common reply is, that "they are exceedingly dangerous; they make men *sceptical*." Now it is natural to ask the many worthy and respectable



persons by whom this objection is made (what perhaps they have not always recollected to ask themselves), "What is it you mean by scepticism?" If that word is used to denote a habit of mind slow and cautious in forming its conclusions, sufficiently distrustful of itself to be desirous of knowing what can be urged against the inferences which it inclines to adopt, and even so far diffident of its performances as to be perfectly willing, upon the appearance of new lights, to re-examine those positions which had been adopted upon no slight investigation: if this, or any thing like this meaning, belongs to the word scepticism, we cannot hesitate to say, that those who object to the metaphysical studies on such grounds, pass upon them, in the form of a censure, a very high eulogium. There is hardly any habit more pernicious, not merely in scientific researches, but daily and hourly in every department of life, than that loose indolent way which men have of jumping upon their conclusions in all sorts of subjects, and accepting, almost without examination, sentiments and maxims of the most extensive practical import. If, on the other hand, by scepticism is intended a disposition of mind unfavourable to the cordial reception of the truths of religion, upon what evidence is it asserted, that metaphysical studies have the tendency imputed to them? Was Locke a sceptic? Was Clarke a sceptic? Was Berkeley a sceptic? All these great men not only openly professed their belief in Christianity, but thought they could not

better employ their best years and maturest faculties than by consecrating them to the defence of those truths, which thoughtless, licentious men are apt to deride, but which it is the peculiar character of a truly elevated understanding to feel and venerate. Bishop Berkeley, in particular, was led to the adoption of his peculiar theory in metaphysics, principally from an anxiety to refute the *sceptics* of his day, whose reasonings were all founded on the received opinions respecting a material world: and in the work which he entitled "The Minute Philosopher," he has discussed at large all the prevailing objections to natural and revealed religion, and employed much of his metaphysical learning, particularly his important discoveries respecting vision, and his very fine and original speculations on the nature of language, as materials for replying to those objections. Mr. Hume, indeed, whom every body knows to have been sceptical enough, has applied that term to characterize the Berkeleian theory; But let Berkeley speak for himself, and in his own writings, not in the commentaries of his scholars; and it will be found that he dogmatized (we do not mean in the invidious, but in the proper sense of that word) as steadily as Zeno or Epicurus; though perfectly free from the austerity of the one, and the pride of the other. In later days, symptoms of an unfavourable disposition towards Christianity have certainly been visible in the works of some of the most celebrated metaphysical writers in Scotland, and upon the continent; and this probably is the

real explanation of the evil report which has gone forth against metaphysics. But we suspect that this is exactly one of those hasty conclusions from first appearances, which we have just condemned. Speculative men have for some time past turned their attention a good deal to the philosophy of mind, and it has happened (from causes which are perfectly explicable), that speculative men, during the same period, have had a sort of vanity in professing scepticism upon religious subjects ; but it does not therefore follow that metaphysics and infidelity have any natural alliance. It was not always thus. In the ancient world, the infidels were found among the natural philosophers ; in the schools of Epicurus, not in those of Plato and Aristotle. In the middle ages, metaphysics were assiduously cultivated by the stoutest doctors of the Church : Aquinas and Abelard, and Ockham, and all the pillars of orthodoxy, were deep in the philosophy of Aristotle, and fought as fiercely about *universals*, as if the fate of religion had depended on the controversy ; while those, who, neglecting such matters, quietly cultivated researches into physics, laboured under a pretty general suspicion of infidelity. Galileo was sent to a dungeon in his old age, not for any speculations upon mind, but for the discoveries he had made respecting the constitution of nature. So late as the days of Sir Thomas Brown, that learned and eloquent writer informs us that the physicians had long been generally supposed to entertain opinions unfavourable to the truth of Christianity ; and he published his *Religio Me-*



dici to rescue himself from the imputation which attached to his profession. And, in our own time, the greatest naturalist in Italy professed Atheism. It may therefore, perhaps, be fairly said, that, in respect of any supposed tendency to scepticism, the evidence of history is full as strong against natural philosophy as against metaphysics; yet who ever dreamed of proscribing the natural sciences? Let us at least be just, and either condemn the researches of Galileo and Newton, or acknowledge that neither the philosophy of mind nor the philosophy of nature have any natural alliance with scepticism, though sceptics may occasionally be found among the students of both.

The end of all knowledge is to enable us better to understand the will of God, and more perfectly to obey it. Unsanctified by these principles, neither wit nor learning can be of any lasting benefit to their possessors, and may but swell the sad account they must one day render. Let us not be misunderstood. If we recommend metaphysical studies, or any other studies not strictly religious, it is not for their own sake that we recommend them. Every thing is trifling which has not some respect to our everlasting destiny; and it matters really very little, if the amusement of the present time is our only object, whether that is sought at a puppet-show, or in the schools of philosophy. Life resembles a well-constructed drama. There must be variety of incidents and some little episode may fairly be admitted. But unity of action is indispensable, and every lesser

part must tend upon the whole to swell the interest of the great catastrophe. In the pursuits of learning, if we would be wise to any purpose, the glory of God must be our great aim ; the advancement of practical holiness in our own hearts, and in the world; an object continually present to our thoughts. Directed towards such ends, the value of learning is unquestionable, and is indeed now doubted only by weak enthusiasts. Different pursuits may be suited to different understandings and conditions of life : some studies may be in their nature more practically profitable than others : but in the circle of useful sciences, we cannot hesitate to include the philosophy of the human mind : we see many reasons for expecting advantages to result from its cultivation, and none of any real moment for proscribing it.

Mr. Stewart, after dismissing the topics discussed in his preliminary chapters, employs about an hundred and fifty pages in noticing different theories which have prevailed respecting the sources of human knowledge. It is certainly to be lamented that these inquiries should have engaged too exclusively the attention of metaphysical writers ; so that, by many persons, the whole science of the philosophy of the mind is imagined to be confined to this, the least satisfactory and least useful part of it. Yet the subject is curious in itself, and is rendered still more so by the efforts which some very powerful and original thinkers have made to clear its obscurity. It would be a very serious undertaking to

follow Mr. Stewart systematically through this "dark, illimitable ocean; but we may track his voyage, and admire the skill with which he keeps his reckoning, notwithstanding a cloudy sky, shifting winds, and cross currents.

The first Essay, which is divided into four chapters, treats principally of the account which Mr. Locke gave of the origin of human knowledge. This great man was the first who applied the canons of philosophy, which Bacon had recommended, to metaphysical researches; and though his conclusions were far from being always correct, his labours were so considerable as to have purchased for him, both in this country and upon the continent, the character of the father of the intellectual philosophy. The following are his leading opinions respecting the origin of our knowledge. He insists that the mind naturally is unfurnished with any of the materials of knowledge; in contradiction to the schoolmen, and to Des Cartes, who held the doctrine of innate ideas. Through the medium of the senses, (he says,) we acquire all our ideas of external objects; and (agreeing with the schoolmen in their opinion that the external objects themselves are not united to the mind,) he describes the ideas thus received to be copies or images of the objects. The other class of our ideas he conceives to be derived from the "perception of the operation of our mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got." These ideas thus acquired "the understanding has the power to repeat, compare, and unite; and so can make at

pleasure new complex ideas; but it has not the power to invent or frame one new simple idea in the mind, not taken in by the ways before mentioned.\*”

This fair structure, stately and imposing as it was, when the hand of Locke erected it, has suffered some loss of its early splendour. It has been assailed by more modern artists; and though enough of it remains to testify to the magnificence of the design, a considerable portion of the building has been levelled with the ground. First came Leibnitz and Lord Shaftesbury, who insist that many things are *innate* in the mind, particularly the intellectual powers themselves, and the simple ideas which are necessarily unfolded by their exercise. A part of this, doubtless, is true; but the truth is so obvious that it may, perhaps, safely be affirmed, that Mr. Locke never dreamed of denying it. That our faculties, as conception, memory, and the like, are not ideas acquired by sensation or reflection, is just as plain as that the powers of perceiving and reflecting are not so acquired. It is mere trifling to say, that Mr. Locke has not marked the distinction. He was not bound to mark it. It is involved of necessity in the statement of his theory. For the rest; by what sort of logic is it that ideas, “ unfolded by the exercise of our faculties †,” can be shewn to be innate?

\* Locke's Essay, Book ii. Chap. 1, 2.

† We quote from Mr. Stewart's translation, or rather version, of the passage in Leibnitz's works; the original is very obscure.



But a much ruder shock was soon afterwards given to a large part of Mr. Locke's system by the hand of Berkeley. Locke, believing firmly in the independent existence of the external world, yet seeing that the mind could take notice only of its own perceptions, imagined (according to the old doctrine of the schools,) that these perceptions, or ideas, must be exact resemblances of material things: and though he made a distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of matter, holding the former, as extension, solidity, and figure, to exist in the external things themselves; but the latter, as heat and colour, to exist only in the mind; yet, on the whole, his doctrine was, that our knowledge of the material world is obtained from the ideas or images of it introduced through the senses; "the one being the perfect resemblance of the other as they are in a mirror.\*" This is what is generally called the *ideal theory*, which, though manifestly hypothetical, incapable of proof, and almost unintelligible, has maintained its ground in this country against all opposition, and is, to this day, gravely taught to the young students of, at least, one of our universities. Against this theory Berkeley's metaphysical writings were principally directed; and the substance of his argument is pretty well given in the following passages: "As for our senses, by them we have the knowledge only of our sensations, ideas, or those things which are immedi-

\* Locke's Essay, Book ii. ch. 8.

ately perceived by sense, call them what you will; but they do not inform us that things exist without a mind, or unperceived, like to those which are perceived." On the contrary, "as there can be no notion or thought but in a thinking being, so there can be no sensation but in a sentient being: its very essence consists in being felt. Nothing can resemble a sensation but a similar sensation in the same or some other mind, To think that any quality in a thing inanimate can resemble a sensation, is absurd, and a contradiction in terms\*." Whoever will be at the trouble of considering attentively these passages, will see, that, as against Mr. Locke and his followers, they are conclusive. How far they render doubtful, (supposing that to be possible,) the independent existence of the material world, which Dr. Reid and others say is made known to us in quite another manner from that described by Mr. Locke, is an entirely different question.

To another part of Mr. Locke's system, Mr. Stewart has himself furnished some considerable objections. They are borrowed, in substance, from Leibnitz and Lord Shaftesbury, but are arranged so much more skilfully by the writer who has adopted them than they had been by their first assertors, that he seems to have acquired some right to be considered as the proper owner. Locke maintained, that all our ideas are originally acquired from the *perception* of external objects, and of the ope-

\* Principles of Human Knowledge, s. 18.

rations of our own minds : or, as he often expresses himself, from sensation and reflection. This is, in effect, saying that consciousness is exclusively the source of all our knowledge ; and it would follow as a necessary inference, even though he had not distinctly so stated it, that “the understanding has not the power of inventing one new simple idea.” The difficulties attending this doctrine will be sufficiently explained by the following extract from Mr. Stewart.

“There are a variety of notions so connected with our different intellectual faculties, that the exercises of the faculty may be justly regarded as a condition indispensably necessary to account for the first origin of the notion. Thus by a mind destitute of the faculty of *memory*, neither the ideas of *time*, nor of *motion*, nor of *personal identity*, could possibly have been formed ; ideas, which are confessedly among the most familiar of all those we possess, and which cannot be traced immediately to *consciousness* by any effort of logical subtilty. In like manner, without the faculty of *abstraction*, we never could have formed the idea of *number* ; nor of *lines*, *surfaces*, and *solids*, as they are considered by the mathematician ; nor would it have been possible for us to comprehend the meaning of such words as *classes* or *assortments*, or indeed of any of the grammatical *parts of speech* but proper names. Without the power of *reason* or *understanding*, it is no less evident that no comment could have helped us to unriddle the import of the words, *truth*, *certainty*, *probability*, *theorem*, *premises*, *conclusion* ; nor of any one of those which express the various sorts of *relation* which fall under our knowledge. In such cases, all that can be said, is, that the exercise of a particular faculty furnishes the *occasion* on



which certain simple notions are, by the laws of our constitution, presented to our thoughts; nor does it seem possible for us to trace the origin of a particular notion any farther than to ascertain what the nature of the *occasion* was, which in the first instance introduced it to our acquaintance.\* ”

It is manifest, that the objections here stated against Mr. Locke's theory are the same in kind with those above mentioned to have been urged by Leibnitz and Lord Shaftesbury, when they insist that certain *innate* ideas are necessarily unfolded by the exercise of our faculties. *Existence, personal identity, and truth*, are the ideas mentioned by Leibnitz. *Order, administration, and the notion of a God*, are specified by Lord Shaftesbury†. But Mr. Stewart, with the caution of an able commander, who knows the country in which he is acting, and the ambushes that may beset him, is not only careful to avoid the impropriety of terming the ideas which he specifies *innate ideas*, but avoids giving any opinion as to the manner in which they are acquired; only affirming, in contradiction to Mr. Locke, that they cannot be traced immediately to consciousness.

We feel very little disposition to enter into this controversy. It is of small importance how the ideas mentioned by Mr Stewart are acquired; whether, as seems most likely, by a rapid and almost intuitive act of the understanding, or by some less

\* Essay I. chap. ii. page 15.

† See Letters to a Student at the University. Letter 8.

intelligible process, which we call a law of our constitution, because we know not what else to call it. We agree with him in thinking that they cannot be traced to consciousness; and we think, too, that Mr. Locke was rather rash in affirming that the understanding cannot frame one new simple idea. We do not, however, agree, that all the words mentioned by Mr. Stewart and Lord Shaftesbury express simple ideas. *Time* is not a simple notion, for it implies succession: so does *motion*: so does *personal identity*. *Order* is not a simple idea, for it supposes the arrangement of several things: so does *administration*: and the idea of *Deity* is one of the most complex in nature. But *existence* is a simple idea; and it is not easy to see how it can be acquired, except by a rapid act of the understanding immediately consequent upon perception.

Mr. Stewart appears to attach importance to the observations which we have above extracted; not on account of any anxiety he feels respecting the origin of our knowledge, but for a reason far better suited to his just and comprehensive understanding. That part of Mr. Locke's theory, which represents consciousness as the source of all our knowledge, has been made the ground work of some very pernicious opinions respecting morals. Dr. Hutcheson saw, that according to the received system, if *right* and *wrong* express simple ideas, their origin must be referred, not to reason, but to some appropriate power of perception. To this power he gave the name of the *moral sense*, little aware of the dangerous con-

clusions towards which he was advancing. Mr. Hume, more acute, and far more daring, immediately perceived, that if right and wrong are made known to us by sense, they stand in exactly the same relation to us as taste, colours, and other sensible qualities, of which it is difficult to affirm, as of truth and error, that they are fixed and immutable; but which seem to depend much upon the organs of the sentient being, and to *be*, really and essentially, such as they are perceived to be. True to this distinction, we find him continually representing morality as the object, not of *reason* but of *taste*; and the inference is, that it shifts with the shifting fashions and opinions of men, being one thing at Athens, another at Rome, and a third in London\*.

It is highly gratifying to see so distinguished a writer as Mr. Stewart engaged on the side of virtue, and employing his learning and sagacity to sap a system of licentious sentiment miscalling itself morals. Yet we do not think that his just criticism, upon that part of Locke's opinions which Mr. Hume adopted, was necessary for the discussion of the moral (or rather, immoral) theory above mentioned. *Right* and *wrong* are evidently terms of reference, and have respect to some rule previously established. What that rule should be, is of no

\* See the dialogue in the second volume of Mr. Hume's Essays, which immediately precedes the history of natural religion. See also Essays, vol. i. note [F.]; and vol. ii. Appendix, concerning Moral Sentiment.

importance to the present argument; for surely it is abundantly plain, that so momentous a concern as the discovery of the true principles which are to govern the whole system of our lives, ought not to be abandoned to mere feeling; that it is, at the least, our duty to be secure, that the impulses of sentiment, (supposing all that can be urged in favour of a moral sense to be true,) are guaranteed, ratified, and established by the deliberate conclusions of the understanding; that reason is the highest principle of our nature, and ought to decide upon our highest interests.

After Locke comes Berkeley; a man equally eminent for his genius and his benevolence; a zealous defender of the Christian truth, and, at one period of his life, a sort of missionary for its propagation\*. The leading feature of his philosophy is pretty generally known, and has excited a great deal of ridicule among those who do not understand it, and a great deal of surprise among those who do. When Berkeley told men that there is no external world, they stared, and thought him mad. When he assured them, that "if his principles were once admitted, atheism and scepticism would be utterly destroyed; many intricate points made plain; great

\* Berkeley, during many years of his life, laboured zealously to effect the establishment of a college at Bermuda, for the purpose of converting the American Indians, which he proposed to superintend personally; and he went there himself for the purpose of forwarding the scheme; but it failed ultimately, through the inactivity of others.



difficulties solved; speculation referred to practice; and men reduced from paradoxes to common sense\*;" they only stared the more, and thought him still more mad. But when they had heard him explain the meaning of his propositions, and state the reasonings on which they were built; though they might still continue to stare and to reject his reasoning, all who comprehended him agreed that there were, at least, no symptoms of derangement. The truth is, Berkeley's train of reasoning is so ingenious, and his eloquence so fascinating, and the arguments which he presses in support of his opinions so plausible, that it is difficult, for a moment, not to be subdued. Dr. Reid, his great antagonist, acknowledges that he, at one time, had embraced the whole of his theory. And Mr. Stewart, a no less zealous nor less powerful opponent, says, (if we mistake not,) in another work, that a man can hardly be a philosopher who has not, at some period of his life, doubted of the existence of matter.

Mr. Stewart begins his essay on the *Idealism of Berkeley*, with declaring that it is not his intention to enter at all into the argument with respect to the truth of this theory.

To this resolution he has not very scrupulously adhered. The essay before us contains some very acute and original observations, which the author thinks nearly, or quite, conclusive against the Bishop's opinion. We have not room to enter into a

\* Preface to the Dialogues between Hylas and Phylonous.



formal analysis of these objections, and shall content ourselves with expressing, as concisely and fairly as we can, the substance of Berkeley's theory, and of what has been said in reply to it.

The argument against the existence of material things may be thus stated. The whole world around us is composed of visible and tangible objects\*; that is, of things perceived by the mind through the medium of the senses; that is, of mental perceptions. Is there any thing more than this? If there be, let us know it. What is it like? If like these perceptions, it must be a perception also; for what can resemble an impression on a sentient being, but some other impression on a sentient being? If it is like none of our perceptions, then it is plain we have not the slightest acquaintance with it. No man was ever able to give any other account of the material world, than that above given. It is then composed entirely of mental perceptions: and if the mind were destroyed, must not its perceptions perish with it? The experimental test to which the Berkeleians refer is *dreaming*; when the mind (they say) perceives objects exactly similar to those which it perceives when awake, though nobody ever thought of ascribing to the former an independent existence.

The reply to this theory is as follows. What we know of the external world, is undoubtedly known through the medium of the senses; but it is not true

\* Tastes, sounds, and odours, are so manifestly impressions on the mind, that they are not worth noticing.

that nothing can be known to us by the senses except our sensations: for the fact is, and the concurrent feelings of all men agree respecting it, that by some law of our nature unknown to us\*, the impressions made upon the senses are accompanied with an instinctive knowledge of external things, and an indestructible belief of their existence independently of us. The experimental test to which Dr. Reid and Mr. Stewart principally refer, is the idea we have of *space*; which involves (they say) an irresistible conviction, not only that its existence is external, but that it is everlasting and necessary; so that, though there is no absurdity in supposing all material bodies to be destroyed by the power of the Creator, the annihilation of space is inconceivable.

Such are the respective theories of Bishop Berkeley and Dr. Reid.

It is proper, however, to add, that neither the speculations of Berkeley nor of Reid ought to be regarded as affecting the certainty of our knowledge. Our ideas are exactly the same, our senses and fa-

\* The following passage is extracted from the works of D'Alembert; it is translated by Mr. Stewart. "The truth is, that as no relation whatever can be discovered between a sensation in the mind and the object by which it is occasioned, or at least to which we refer it, it does not appear possible to trace, by dint of reasoning, any practicable passage from the one to the other. Nothing but a species of *instinct*, more sure in its operation than reason itself, could so forcibly transport us across the gulph by which mind seems to be separated from the material world."

culties remain unchanged, upon the supposition of either theory being true. Nor ought the question respecting the independent existence of a material world, if rightly stated, in any manner to influence our practical conduct: for a material world is nothing to us except as it is perceived or felt, and our perceptions and feelings are a plain matter of fact, which no speculations can alter. This leads us to notice a pretty general mistake respecting Berkeley's opinions, for which Mr. Hume is principally responsible, and which Mr. Stewart, with equal justice and candour, endeavours to remove. We cannot explain it better than by his own words.

“ It is well known, to all who have the slightest acquaintance with the history of philosophy, that, among the various topics on which the ancient sceptics exercise their ingenuity, the question concerning the existence of the material world was always a favourite subject of disputation. Some doubts on the same point occur even in the writings of philosophers whose general leaning seems to have been to the opposite extreme of dogmatism. Plato himself has given them some countenance, by hinting it as a thing not quite impossible, that human life is a continued sleep, and that all our thoughts are only dreams. This scepticism proceeds on principles totally different from the doctrine of Berkeley; who asserts, with the most dogmatical confidence, that the existence of matter is *impossible*, and that the very supposition of it is absurd. . . .

‘ The existence of bodies out of a mind perceiving them (he tells us, explicitly,) is not only impossible, and a contradiction in terms; but were it possible, and even real, it were impossible we should ever know it.’

“ With respect to Mr. Hume, who is generally con-

sidered as an advocate for Berkeley's system, the remarks which I have offered on the latter writer must be understood with great limitations. For although his fundamental principles lead necessarily to Berkeley's conclusion, and although he has frequently drawn from them this conclusion himself, yet on other occasions he relapses into the language of doubt, and only speaks of the existence of a material world, as of a thing of which we have not satisfactory evidence. The truth is, that whereas Berkeley was sincerely and *boná fide* an idealist, Hume's leading object in his metaphysical writings plainly was to inculcate an universal scepticism. In this respect, the real scope of his arguments has, I think, been misunderstood by most, if not all, of his opponents. It evidently was not, as they seem to have supposed, to exalt *reasoning* in preference to our instinctive principles of belief; but, by illustrating the contradictory conclusions to which our different faculties lead, to involve the whole subject in the same suspicious darkness. In other words, his aim was, not to *interrogate* nature with a view to the discovery of truth, but, by a cross examination of nature, to involve her in such contradictions as might set aside the whole of her evidence as good for nothing.

“ With respect to Berkeley, on the other hand, it appears from his writings, not only that he considered his scheme of idealism as resting on demonstrative proof, but as more agreeable to the common apprehensions of mankind, than the prevailing theories of philosophers, concerning the independent existence of the material world\*.”

Nothing can be more complete than this vindication of Berkeley from the ordinary charge of scepticism: We hope, too, that those who have been

\* Essay II. chap. i.

accustomed to admire Mr. Hume's genius and acuteness, will learn to receive his opinions on moral and religious subjects with some hesitation, when they see what are the sentiments entertained of his metaphysical writings by so high an authority as Mr. Stewart. We do not exact of every philosophical writer, that he should depreciate Mr. Hume; but we certainly think it indicates great manliness and integrity of understanding in Mr. Stewart, to have exposed with so much courage, and with so much truth, the pernicious aims of his celebrated countryman. We can forgive a Scotchman for admiring Mr. Hume: what then must be our feelings towards one who can condemn him?

Mr. Stewart has vindicated Berkeley in the above extract, with great success, against a misconception which has pretty generally prevailed; but we think he has himself given some countenance to another. He appears to consider the metaphysical opinions of that writer as built upon Mr. Locke's theory of ideas, and consequently as standing or falling with it. Berkeley, however, would, we are persuaded, have strenuously denied both the fact and the inference. He adopted the language then in use among metaphysicians, for the sake of reasoning with them; and was content to consider ideas as images, that he might shew, from the tenets avowed by Mr. Locke's scholars, that the conclusions of their master were erroneous. But the truth or inaccuracy of Berkeley's opinions does not at all rest



on the particular meaning affixed to the word idea ; his arguments remaining precisely of the same value whether we retain that word, or substitute, as he frequently does, the words sensation, notion, or impression, in the room of it.

Besides the schools of Locke, Berkeley, and Reid, there is one other, and only one, of British growth ; the school of materialism ; to which Mr. Stewart has devoted a separate essay. But before we give an account of this, it is necessary to stop for a moment at his third essay, respecting the philosophical systems which prevailed in France during the latter part of the eighteenth century.

“ The account given by Locke,” says Mr. Stewart, “ of the origin of our ideas, which furnished the chief subject of one of the foregoing essays, has for many years past been adopted implicitly, and almost universally, as a fundamental and unquestionable truth, by the philosophers of France. It was early sanctioned in that country by the authority of Fontanelle, whose mind was probably prepared for its reception by some similar discussions in the works of Gassendi. At a later period, it acquired much additional celebrity from the vague and exaggerated encomiums of Voltaire ; and it has since been assumed as the common basis of their respective conclusions concerning the history of the human understanding, by Condillac, Turgot, Helvetius, Diderot, D’Alembert, Condorcet, Destruitt, Tracy, De Gerando, and many other

writers of the highest reputation, at complete variance with each other in the general spirit of their philosophical systems\*.

“ But although all these ingenious men have laid hold eagerly of this common principle of reasoning, and have vied with each other in extolling Locke for the sagacity which he has displayed in unfolding it, hardly two of them can be named, who have understood it exactly in the same sense; and perhaps not one who has understood it precisely in the sense annexed to it by the author. What is still more remarkable, the praise of Locke has been loudest from those who seem to have taken the least pains to ascertain the import of his conclusions.”— pp. 101—103.

What Mr. Stewart considers, in the above extract, as a remarkable circumstance, admits, we believe, of an explanation sufficiently simple and satisfactory, The French philosophers, who, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, exerted themselves to enlighten their own countrymen and the world on the subject of religion, had some favourite topics of speculation. Among these, none appears to have been thought more generally agreeable, than the question of the *mortality* of the soul; or, rather, of man, whatever materials compose him. Condorcet informs us, that the great Voltaire, though he be-

\* -Tous les philosophes Francois de ce siècle ont fait gloire de se ranger au nombre des disciples de Locke, et d'admettre ses principes.—De Gerando de la Generation des Connoissances Humaines, p. 81.

lieved in a First Cause, notwithstanding the difficulties attending that doctrine, (could more than this be in reason expected from any man!) did not believe in existence after death. Now the *sage* Locke (as they loved to call him) had discovered something that seemed to be very important in this respect. Helvetius's account of his theory is, "that every thing in man resolves ultimately into sensation, or the operation of feeling\*." Condorcet says, "Locke proved by his analysis that all our ideas are compounded of sensations†;" and Diderot, who professed a perfect allegiance to the same master, observes, "Every idea must necessarily, when brought to its state of ultimate decomposition, resolve itself into a sensible representation, or picture; and, hence," he adds, "an important rule in philosophy, that every expression, which cannot find an external and a sensible object to which it can thus establish its affinity, is destitute of signification‡." The manifest result, then, from Locke's discoveries must be, that a man is a mere bundle of perceptions; and who ever dreamed of attributing to perceptions more than a dependent and momentary existence?

To be sure, it cannot well be denied, that the great men above-mentioned are chargeable with a trifling over-sight in their statement of this matter. The *sage* Locke (as our English readers may per-

\* De l'Esprit. Disc. IV. Ap. Stewart.

† Outlines of Historic View, &c. English translation, p. 108. Ap. Stewart.

‡ Œuvres de Diderot. Tom. VI. Ap. Stewart.

haps recollect,) in addition to what he says respecting ideas of sensation, speaks of another class, which he calls ideas of reflection, and which he represents us as acquiring by contemplating the operations of a certain living, sentient, active, and immaterial thing, called *mind*. This part of his work the French philosophers, by some accident, omitted to notice. Perhaps they thought it unworthy of so great a man: perhaps it was a mere oversight; not much for a foreigner. Be that as it may, the fact is indisputable; and our readers may possibly think it tends to explain the remarkable circumstance mentioned by Mr. Stewart, that, among the “ingenious” men whom he names, “the praise of Locke has been loudest from those who seem to have taken the least pains to ascertain the import of his conclusions.”

Had the doctrine of the materialists been earlier established in this island, it is probable the writers above alluded to would have preferred it to the opinions of Mr. Locke; as it certainly falls in more naturally with the great moral and religious points which they laboured to establish. Of this school Dr. Hartley was the founder; and his principal disciples, whom, together with their master, Mr. Stewart happily terms “alchemists in the science of the mind,” have been Dr. Priestley, Dr. Darwin, Mr. Belsham, and Mr. Horne Tooke,

Of the theories of these writers we would gladly give an account, having really every disposition to treat them handsomely; but after making some ef-

forts to render a detailed exposition of their doctrines intelligible, we have been compelled to give up the undertaking as hopeless. The sum, however, of their creed appears to be, that the medullary substance of the brain is of such a nature, that objects striking upon it, through the senses, excite therein little undulatory motions or vibrations, which of course communicate rapidly to the right and left; a prodigious number and variety of undulations follow; and so the whole of the brain being set a shaking, all sorts of ideas, simple and complex, including those which Locke calls ideas of reflection, and, as it should seem, all the faculties of the understanding also, are gradually shaken out.

The difficulties which attend this theory are only two. First, that nobody ever yet knew any thing about these marvellous undulations of the brain, or is able even to prove their existence. Secondly, that all the undulations in the world can never produce an idea; a vibration having exactly as much connection with an intellectual phenomenon, as gravitation, cohesion, repulsion, or any thing else imaginable,

The history of the progress of materialism is curious. Hartley, who first introduced the theory of vibrations, saw plainly enough whither it led. But he was afraid of his own conclusions. After observing that "his theory must be allowed to overturn all the arguments which are usually brought for the immateriality of the soul, from the subtilty of the internal senses, and of the rational faculty;"



he acknowledges candidly his own conviction, that "matter and motion, however subtly divided or reasoned upon, yield nothing but matter and motion still;" and therefore requests "that he may not be in any way interpreted, so as to oppose the immateriality of the soul\*." Dr. Priestly, Hartley's great apostle, appears, like his master, to have been a little timid. At one period of his life, he was the advocate of what he calls "the immateriality of matter, or rather, the mutual penetration of matter;" a doctrine which he expounds in an inimitably original and unintelligible passage, which is extracted from his "History of Discoveries relating to Vision," by Mr. Stewart. At another period of his life, he inclined to the materiality of mind. But the only opinion in which he uniformly persevered, was, that "man does not consist of two principles, so essentially different from one another as matter and spirit; but that the whole man is of some *uniform composition*†." At last came Dr. Darwin (who never embarrassed himself with little difficulties,) and declared, in the very outset of his work, that "the word *idea*, which has various meanings in metaphysical writers, may be defined to be a contraction, or motion, or configuration, of the fibres which constitute the immediate organ of sense." So that, according to this writer, the idea which a man has of his father is a contraction of one of his own fibres; and that which he possesses of the universe

\* Hartley's Observations, pp. 511, 512. Ap. Stewart.

† Preface to Disquisitions, p. 7. Ap. Stewart.

is a configuration of another. In the *Addendum* to the *Zoonomia*, the same learned author compares “the universal prepossession, that ideas are immaterial beings, to the stories of ghosts and apparitions, which have so long amused the credulous, without any foundation in nature.”

Mr. Horne Tooke’s title to be considered as a materialist, is rather more questionable than that of Dr. Darwin, or any of his predecessors ; but he is so loudly claimed by the followers of that sect, and his services are considered as so great, that it would be a sort of cruelty to attempt to rob them of an authority they prize so highly. His labours, in their cause, have been entirely philological ; but they are not, on that account, valued the less by his metaphysical allies, and seem to be considered as a beautiful instance of the lights which sister sciences may throw upon one common truth. The leading principle of Mr. Tooke’s work is, that the true meaning of words is to be sought in their roots, and that men talk at random, or as he expresses it, “gabble like things most brutish,” when they use terms in any other than that which may be shewn to be their proper historic sense. Now it so happens (and, from the nature of things, it could not happen otherwise,) that the basis of a language is principally to be found in words expressing sensible objects ; for these obviously were the first, the most necessary, and most intelligible ideas ; and when, afterwards, it was requisite to speak of any thing not subject to the observation of the senses, instead

of a mere arbitrary sound, a metaphor was used : that is, something known was employed to explain something unknown, as the best approximation that could be made to it. Nothing can be more simple and natural than all this ; but this matter of fact, (though admitting of so easy an explanation,) is considered by the materialists as a prodigious argument in favour of their theory. Language certainly carries us back, in the history of its etymology, to sensible objects ; and it is thence inferred, quite “ *de bonne foi*,” and with all the tranquillity of a demonstrative truth, that every thing expressed by language must, of course, be a sensible object also. Mr. Tooke has not always taken the trouble to draw this conclusion ; but it is pretty plainly intimated in his disquisitions, as well as evidently implied in the principle on which he reasons ; and, on one very important occasion, it is distinctly expressed. Of the word *right*, he observes, that it may be shewn. to mean nothing but what is *ordered* : and of the words expressing the *soul*, in the Latin and Greek languages, he proves that they mean only *wind* or *breath* : leaving, in both these instances, the corollary to his readers. But, on the word *truth*, he has the following remarkable paragraphs. “ *True*, as we now write it, or *trew*, as it was formerly written, means simply and merely, that which is *trowed*. And instead of being a rare commodity upon earth, except only in words, there is nothing but truth in the world.

“That every man, in his communication with others, should speak that which he *troweth*, is of so great importance to mankind, that it ought not to surprize us, if we find the most extravagant praises bestowed upon *truth*. But truth supposes mankind; for whom, and by whom, alone, the word is formed, and to whom alone it is applicable. If no man, no truth. There is, therefore, no such thing as eternal, immutable, everlasting truth; unless mankind, such as they be at present, be also eternal, immutable, and everlasting\*.”

We cannot enter upon a formal refutation of this puerile theory. Mr. Stewart has examined and sifted it with great ability in the chapters which he has devoted to the consideration of Mr Tooke’s philological speculations; and nothing can be more masterly than his attack, or more complete than his triumph. Two things surely are most obvious:—that there is such a thing as speaking metaphorically and that the sense which belonged to a word five hundred years ago may not be the sense which belongs to it at present. If Mr. Tooke’s theory is correct, when we say that a lion is a *humane* animal, we mean that he is a man; a private gentleman is an *idiot*; an *instant* is a standing thing; a *result* is a jumping thing; to *attend* to a person, is to walk up to him; to *impress* ideas upon the mind, is to squeeze them in, and to *express* them, is to squeeze them

\* Diversions of Purley, Ap. Stewart, 167.



out again : when two men *converse*, they turn round together ; when Mr. Tooke *advanced* his theory, he overthrew it ; when he *supported* it, he carried it on his shoulders ; and when he *inculcated* it, he trod it under his feet.

After having so long detained our readers with our own comments, it would be unpardonable not to present them with the following just, striking, and very eloquent observations, from the pen of Mr. Stewart :—

“ The philological speculations to which the foregoing criticisms refer, have been prosecuted by various ingenious writers, who have not ventured (perhaps who have not meant) to draw from them any inferences in favour of materialism. But the obscure hints frequently thrown out, of the momentous conclusions to which Mr. Tooke’s *discoveries* are to lead, and congratulations with which they were hailed by the author of *Zoonomia*, and by other phisiologists of the same school, leave no doubt with respect to the ultimate purpose to which they have been supposed to be subservient. In some instances, these writers express themselves, as if they conceived the philosophy of the human mind to be inaccessible to all who have not been initiated in their cabalistical-mysteries, and sneer at the easy credulity of those who imagine that the substantive *spirit* means any thing else than *breath* ; or the adjective *right*, any thing essentially different from a line forming the shortest distance between two points. The language of those metaphysicians who have recommended an abstraction from things external as a necessary preparation for studying our intellectual frame, has been censured as bordering upon enthusiasm, and as calculated to inspire a childish wonder at a department of knowledge, which, to



the few who are let into the secret, presents nothing above the comprehension of the grammarian and the anatomist. For my own part, I have no scruple to avow, that the obvious tendency of these doctrines to degrade the nature and faculties of man in his own estimation, seems to me to afford, of itself, a very strong presumption against their truth. Cicero considered it as an objection of some weight to the soundness of an ethical system, that 'it savoured of nothing grand or generous, (*nihil magnificum, nihil generosum sapit* :) nor was the objection so trifling as it may at first appear: for how is it possible to believe that the conceptions of the multitude, concerning the duties of life, are elevated by ignorance, or prejudice, to a pitch which it is the business of reason and philosophy to adjust to an humbler aim? From a feeling somewhat similar, I frankly acknowledge the partiality I entertain towards every theory relating to the human mind, which aspires to ennoble its rank in the creation. I am partial to it, because, in the more sublime views which it opens of the universe, I recognize one of the most infallible characteristics by which the conclusions of inductive science are distinguished from the presumptuous fictions of human folly.

"When I study the intellectual powers of man in the writings of Hartley, of Priestley, of Darwin, or of Tooke, I feel as if I were examining the sorry mechanism that gives motion to a puppet. If, for a moment, I am carried along by their theories of human knowledge and of human life, I seem to myself to be admitted behind the curtain of what I had once conceived to be a magnificent theatre; and while I survey the tinsel frippery of the wardrobe, and the paltry decorations of the scenery, am mortified to discover the trick which had cheated my eye at a distance. This surely is not the characteristic of truth or of nature, the beauties of which invite our closest inspection; deriving new lustre from those microscopical re-

searches which deform the most finished productions of art. If, in our physical inquiries concerning the material world, every step that has been hitherto gained, has at once exalted our conceptions of its immensity, and of its order, can we reasonably suppose that the genuine philosophy of the mind is to disclose to us a spectacle less pleasing, or less elevating, than fancy or vanity had disposed us to anticipate?" pp. 185, 186, 187.

Mr. Stewart's work is divided into two parts. Of the first we have given some account, in which our readers have been conducted rapidly through a considerable part of the *frontier* of metaphysics. Like other frontiers, it is certainly debatable ground; and some of our readers may, perhaps, think it nearly as barren as such territories are apt to be. We will not dispute about this. The journey, whether tedious or agreeable is ended. Those who thought it wearisome, should be pleased to find themselves entering upon a new country; and if any have passed through it without fatigue, they will be the less indisposed to attempt a new excursion. For ourselves, we confess that we are well pleased that Mr. Stewart has confined his remarks on the origin of our knowledge to the first half of his volume. A mind so fertile and so highly cultivated as his, is able, undoubtedly, to lend a charm to every subject; and those who peruse these essays will find (what we fear our critique would little lead them to suppose,) that even the obscure and thorny path through which we have accompanied him, is, in his society, really cheerful. But then it is a little

mortifying to discover, that, with all its intricate meanderings, it leads absolutely no where. The exercise to be sure, is refreshing; but if only exercise is to be found, common sense will tell us to stop, when we begin to grow fatigued.

The subjects on which Mr. Stewart has entered in the latter part of his volume, are of a description which few will think uninteresting, whatever other objections may be made to them. The first of these essays is on the Beautiful, and the second on the Sublime.

It is now somewhat more than half a century since Mr. Burke attempted to explain, on philosophical principles, the causes of that pleasure which every person of sensibility feels in the perusal of the finest writers, and in the contemplation of animate or inanimate nature. Lord Kames preceded him (we believe) a short time, with his "Elements of Criticism;" but from these Mr. Burke appears to have borrowed little, if any thing; and in this country at least, he may be considered as quite original. His followers have not been very numerous, but, for the most part, they have been select; Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Price, Mr. Payne Knight, and Mr. Alison, are all writers of considerable eminence.

It would be an interesting subject of inquiry, whence it happens that certain researches, both literary and philosophical, happen to be omitted (if we may use the expression) for a long series of years—though of a nature, when once investigated, to be-

come exceedingly popular. Both the science of political economy and the science of philosophical criticism had their birth in the last century; yet poets had sung and commercial intercourse existed from the earliest ages. The ancients were passionately fond of eloquence, poetry, music, sculpture, painting; of all the arts for the enjoyment and the perfecting of which a cultivated taste is peculiarly requisite. Nay, taste is exactly the particular in which their superiority over the moderns is the least disputable. Yet their most celebrated critics (and the race was numerous and of high reputation) rarely attempt any thing beyond a delineation of the rules which are to be observed in all just compositions. The principles into which these rules may be resolved, they rarely mention, and never investigate. They resemble the preceptor of young Cyrus in the art of war, who taught him the whole system of manœuvring, but neglected to instruct him in the method of studying the characters of his soldiers, and acquiring an ascendancy over their minds.

It is not very easy to account satisfactorily for this phenomenon. Perhaps the course of sciences which different nations pursue, and the order in which they arise out of each other, depend more upon accidental circumstances, than ordinarily is supposed. If, however, we were obliged to find some probable reason for the neglect of philosophical criticism among the ancients, we should suggest, as one of the chief causes, that peculiar delicacy

of organization and fineness of natural taste with which they were generally gifted, and which would certainly be sought in vain among our own countrymen. Theophrastus was discovered, at Athens, to be a foreigner by speaking the dialect too correctly. Demosthenes was hissed in one of his earliest speeches for a false accent. Euripides shared the same fate at the theatre because he had crowded too many sigmas ( $\sigma$ ) into a verse; and the effect was thought so comical, that Aristophanes more than once made his countrymen merry by mimicking this unhappy line. But the story told of Crassus the orator is the most singular: he was stopped by thunders of applause on pronouncing the following passage:—"Ubi lubido, ibi innocentiae leve præsidium est:" a sentence, the music of which was thought overpowering; though, probably, the most delicate modern ear cannot catch a single tone of its harmony. Where the taste was naturally so fine, it is not very extraordinary that the principles on which it may be cultivated and improved were not anxiously studied; just as very rich soils are those where agriculture is generally most neglected. The common opposition of nature to art is at least thus far founded in truth, that where the former has been remarkably bountiful the second is apt to be inactive.

Perhaps, too, some additional light will be thrown upon the fact already noticed, if we consider the exquisite feeling which was common in the ancient world for whatever is great or affecting. Of this



abundant evidence is afforded by the classical historians, to which it would be difficult to find any thing parallel in modern writers. When Manlius was arraigned for high treason, though the indignation of the people was extreme, they refused to judge him within sight of the Capitol which he had defended. When Scipio appeared to answer a charge of embezzling the public money, he held up to the people the articles of accusation, and, tearing them in pieces, said:—"Romans, on this day I vanquished Hannibal: let us go and return thanks to the immortal gods;" and they followed him to the Capitol. The Greek annals are not less rich than the Latin in anecdotes of a like character: and the prodigious power of the orators, as well as the almost divine honours paid to the poets and artists, testify to the same truth. We suspect that a people capable of such lively emotions would not generally be found very patient auditors of a philosophical lecture upon their feelings. Mr. Burke doubtless is a strong example to the contrary, but Mr. Burke is an exception to all rules. Unless we have mis-read human nature, there is a certain reluctance, almost instinctive, in persons of great sensibility, to the nice dissection of their feelings. The part is too tender to be touched. There are pleasures, the analysis of which is a sort of sacrilege; and pains, on which it would be quite brutal to philosophize. Even where the imagination only is affected, it would be rather mortifying, in the midst of a glow of enthusiasm, to be informed that

nothing could be more just than the emotion, a great part of it being manifestly resolvable into a perception of *fitness*, or of the *sufficient reason*.

These last ideas, which, to avoid prolixity, we have hinted rather than developed, open to us the glimpse of a theory not only unworthy of a more steady attention, and which tends to explain why philosophical criticism arose so late among our own countrymen. We can but just touch it, being pressed by other topics.

It is with nations as with individuals; they feel before they think. The progress of society is from fancy to reason, from sensibility to truth. The writers who flourished in this island from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, are distinguished by an originality and extent of imagination, a copiousness of ideas, a strength of colouring, and an eager, vigorous, untaught eloquence, which we now contemplate with amazement. In respect of correctness both of thought and expression, accurate logic, and that orderly system of discussion which conducts us to truth by the shortest process, they are far inferior to their successors of the eighteenth century. Hume's Essays would probably surprize Barrow almost as much as Barrow's Sermons ought to have astonished Hume. The passions, which were formerly felt and delineated, have since been surveyed and analysed. Men do not, perhaps, think more intensely in the present age, but they watch their thoughts more closely; they are more aware of

the false colours which a subject may present ; they are more in the habit of generalizing ; and have, upon the whole, a far better insight into the philosophical principles of things. Of course, we must not be understood to say, that there was no philosophy in the sixteenth century, or that there was an absolute dearth of imagination in the eighteenth. We speak of the general character of each, without attempting a nice statement of proportions ; and whoever will be at the pains to consider the difference between English and Irish eloquence in the present day, will see something like a living illustration and evidence of the theory which we have thus slightly sketched. The principles which explain why all this takes place, it would not be difficult to assign ; but we have already wandered too far from the work before us.

The different writers who have preceded Mr. Stewart in their inquiries into the sublime and beautiful, have, with the exception at least of Mr. Alison, proceeded, pretty generally, on the supposition that some common quality, or qualities, might be detected in all the various subjects to which the characters of beauty and sublimity are ordinarily attributed. Thus Mr. Burke thinks *smoothness* an essential property of beauty, and insists that all sublime objects will be found to carry with them something of the impression of *terror*. Mr. Price, who is a zealous advocate for Mr. Burke's theory, finding that many rough and angular objects were ordinarily accounted beautiful, bethought himself

of a distinction which might save the infallibility of his great master; and he constantly describes those things which, like the moss rose, fine crystals, and the like, are any thing but smooth, though universally admired, as properly picturesque;—a word so distinctive, in his opinion, of a particular class of objects, that he considers the common expression *picturesque beauty* as a solecism. Mr. Payne Knight is of opinion, that the true characteristic of sublimity is not terror, but *mental energy*. Sir Joshua Reynolds taught, “that the effect of beauty depends on habit only, the most customary form in each species of things being invariably the most beautiful.” This last writer, as he denies that there is any such thing as essential beauty, cannot be said to have sought for its metaphysical principle; but then he assumes, more confidently than any of the writers above named, that there is one master key which commands the whole subject.

Mr. Stewart’s two essays on the beautiful and sublime are of a rather loose texture, and by no means embrace, or profess to embrace, the whole of the subject on which they treat. It was the object of the writer to furnish only such a series of observations, illustrated in examples, as should be sufficient to develop the principle which he apprehends to afford the real explanation of the difficulties that have hitherto embarrassed this question. Mr. Stewart insists, that the writers already mentioned have proceeded “on a mistaken view of the nature of the problem to be solved.” The words *beautiful*

and *sublime* he considers as applied in fact, and capable of being applied with perfect propriety, to a great number of subjects, physical, intellectual, and moral, which are essentially different from each other, which have no certain quality or set of qualities in common, nor, indeed, any general connection whatsoever; except, perhaps, that all beautiful things are agreeable, and that all sublime things are striking. His theory on this question is of a very general nature, and cannot so well be illustrated in any language as his own.

“ The speculations which have given occasion to the foregoing remarks, have evidently originated in a prejudice, which has descended to modern times from the scholastic ages;—that when a word admits of a variety of significations, these different significations must all be *species* of the same *genus*: and must consequently include some essential idea common to every individual to which the generic term can be applied. In the article just quoted, (an article on the word *beau*, by Monsieur Diderot, in the French Encyclopédie,) this prejudice is assumed as an indisputable maxim. ‘ *Beautiful is a term which we apply to an infinite variety of things: but by whatever circumstances these may be distinguished from each other, it is certain either that we make a false application of the word, or that there exists in all of them a common quality, of which the term beautiful is the sign.*’

“ The passage quoted above proceeds on a supposition, which is founded, as I shall endeavour to shew, upon a total misconception of the nature of the circumstances, which, in the history of language, attach different meanings to the same words; and which often, by slow and insensible gradations, remove them to such a distance



from their primitive or radical sense, that no ingenuity can trace the successive steps of their progress. The variety of these circumstances is, in fact, so great, that it is impossible to attempt a complete enumeration of them: and I shall therefore select a few of the cases in which the principle now in question appears the most obviously and indisputably to fail.

“ I shall begin with supposing that the letters A, B, C, D, E, denote a series of objects; that A possesses some one quality in common with B; B a quality in common with C; C a quality in common with D; D a quality in common with E;—while at the same time no quality can be found which belongs in common to any *three* objects in the series. Is it not conceivable that the affinity between A and B may produce a transference of the name of the first to the second; and that, in consequence of the other affinities which connect the remaining objects together, the same name may pass in succession from B to C; from C to D; and from D to E? In this manner a common appellation will arise between A and E, though the two objects may in their nature and properties be so widely distant from each other, that no stretch of imagination can conceive how the thoughts were led from the former to the latter. The transitions, nevertheless, may have been all so easy and gradual, that, were they successfully detected by the fortunate ingenuity of a theorist, we should instantly recognize not only the verisimilitude but the truth of the conjecture;—in the same way as we admit with the confidence of intuitive conviction the certainty of the well-known etymological process which connects the Latin preposition *E* or *Ex*, with the English substantive *stranger*, the moment that the intermediate links of the chain are submitted to our examination.” pp. 214, 216, 217.

There is a plain good sense, as well as a profound philosophy, in this theory, which recommends it to the understanding as soon as it is stated ; and few, probably, of Mr. Stewart's readers will peruse the passage, which we have here extracted, without feeling some surprise that a truth at once so simple and so incontrovertible should have been very imperfectly understood by many of our most eminent writers. For the purpose of developing more completely the principle already stated, Mr. Stewart traces the probable progress of the term *beauty* from its earliest meaning to some of its more remote applications. It is evident that any attempt to pursue a word employed in a very extended sense through all its wanderings, directed, as they must have been, sometimes by accident and caprice, as well as by natural associations, must be considered rather as a specimen of what is possible, than as a history of what actually happened. The truth of the principle does not, however, at all depend on the accuracy with which such an investigation is conducted. Mr. Stewart may be wrong in his conjecture respecting the primitive meaning of the word Beauty ; he may be wrong in every step which he assigns of its subsequent progress ; still it remains indisputable, that the word was originally applied to some one object ; and it is, at the least, in a very high degree probable, that it thence travelled, in consequence of a variety of slight associations, through a vast succession of different ideas to which we find it now applied, but to which, by its applica-

tion, it certainly conveyed no common principles of similarity. In saying this, we do not mean to intimate that the series of probable connections which Mr. Stewart has pointed out, is open to any considerable exceptions. On the contrary, we consider them, so far as they extend, as not only ingenious, but wearing many of the characters of truth. Mr. Stewart supposes the idea of *beauty* to be first acquired from colours; that the word is thence applied to forms; and afterwards to motions. He suggests, also, many plausible and satisfactory reasons for its subsequent transference to sounds; but, though his essay supplies many other illustrations of his general principle, he does not systematically pursue the progress of this word further. He supposes the term *sublime* to have been first suggested by some of the celestial phenomena; from thence to have passed to space in its other dimensions; and gradually, through many very natural and almost universal associations, which he suggests, to have been engrafted on a variety of the most exalted moral and physical ideas.

The Essay upon the Beautiful contains, beside the exposition of Mr. Stewart's doctrine upon the subject, a variety of curious and valuable remarks on the theory of Mr. Burke; on the additions proposed to be made to it by his very ingenious pupil and advocate, Mr. Price; and also on the opinions maintained by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Father Buffier. We have not room to enter upon these criticisms, which are executed with the hand of a master and

the spirit of a gentleman. All the writers above named have undoubtedly fallen into considerable errors upon these subjects ; but it must not thence be inferred that their labours have been altogether fruitless. The alchemists had a notion in ancient times, that there was but one great principle at the foundation of all things ; and that if they could reach this, the whole mystery of material nature would be easily unravelled. Nothing, to be sure, could be more fanciful than their hypothesis ; but the efforts that were made in search of this fugitive essence enriched chymistry with much of its most valuable materials. Thus it has happened also in philosophical criticism ; and of all those who have gone astray in pursuit of a metaphysical quiddity, there is not one who can be considered as having wandered in vain. All have missed the object of their pursuit ; but all have returned home rich with spoils, which are more than an adequate compensation for their labours and their disappointments.

The principle which Mr. Stewart has stated and illustrated in his *Essay on the Beautiful*, is one of very general application, and of great practical importance. It affects, in a greater or less degree, every part of language ; and of course, therefore, as language is the great instrument of thought and communication among men, it connects itself with the most considerable and the most ordinary concerns of human life. This is a fact which it is not difficult, and may perhaps be useful, to establish. Take then, by way of example, a quality which all

admire, and most wish to have the credit of possessing—*courage*. Who, in ancient or modern days, has hesitated to applaud it? With what enthusiasm has it been extolled by poets and orators, by warriors in the field, and statesmen in the senate? Yet the term which custom has thus consecrated, is indifferently applied to subjects of a dissimilar and even opposite complexion. Courage may be mere insensibility to danger; as when Charles the Twelfth received the French ambassador in the trenches, while the balls were tearing up the earth around them. It may be nothing better than a proud obstinacy; as in the Satan of Milton, “Courage never to submit or yield.” It may be only a disguised sort of cowardice; as in many duels, and perhaps also in suicides; Condorcet poisoned himself, because he was afraid to die upon a scaffold. It may be the high blood and boiling spirit of a hero; as in the Duke of Savoy at the battle of Villafranca; and in Condé, when he threw his marshal’s staff into the Austrian lines at Fribourg. It may be an effort of manly reason, in choosing the least of two dangers; as when Cæsar saved his army from destruction in Gaul, by seizing the shield and spear of a legionary, and fighting in the first ranks as a private soldier. Or, lastly, it may be the triumph of conscience and religion over the natural fear of death; as in the confessions of the saints, and “victorious agonies” of the martyrs. The same word, it is plain, is employed to denote a virtue, a vice, and an instinct, which is neither



the one nor the other. To do homage, then, to every thing that is called courage, is to allow ourselves to be cheated of our understandings by a sound. Yet this imposture is neither uncommon nor unimportant. It is capable of affecting, in a wonderful manner, the daily sentiments and actions of men, so as exceedingly to disarrange the moral order of things. Thus, during several periods of the French history, the consideration in which a nobleman was held, depended, in no trifling degree, on the number of duels that he had fought. And even to the present day, while courage is universally admired and exacted in men, timidity is thought to be not only pardonable, but even graceful in the softer sex:—a confusion of ideas that evidently has arisen out of the ambiguous meaning of the term courage; for though a high *bouillant* spirit may not be very becoming in a woman, yet rational superiority to infirm fears, and self-possession in danger, are equally virtuous, and nearly equally valuable in both sexes.

By means of a similar analysis it might be shewn, that a considerable number of those terms which are employed to express moral qualities, become, from the latitude and occasional inaccuracy with which they are used, the sources of practical error. *Good-nature* is universally approved; yet the shades of our approbation, perhaps, are not always distinguished by a reference to the real merit of the quality which it expresses. Frequently it means only a certain unresisting facility of nature, which,

though in some respects engaging, is weak and dangerous. It is occasionally used to express a general cheerfulness of temper. Sometimes it means an instinctive sweetness of disposition, which is very amiable. Sometimes it is applied to an habitual self-restraint, controlling every unkind emotion; which is more respectable, though less lovely, than the quality last mentioned. And sometimes it is confounded with that genuine Christian love, which is the noblest of virtues and best of blessings. It is impossible, in the same manner, not to be struck with the variety of meanings, in which the highly important words, *Faith* and *Grace*, are used by the writers of the New Testament; though to follow these and other expressions, to which the like observation is applicable, through their different acceptations, would require a long dissertation.

It may, then, safely be stated, as a general principle in the history of language, that the identity of the term employed to express certain ideas, by no means proves that there is a radical similarity in the ideas themselves. Because they bear the same name, it does not follow that they belong to the same family. Affinities, merely apparent or accidental, are frequently sufficient to account for their being assembled under a common appellation; so that it is impossible for us to be secure of thinking, speaking, or acting, with correctness, unless we accustom ourselves to look into the nature of things, and employ the sign only to conduct us to the thing

signified. We are all partially acquainted with this truth. Our ordinary intercourse with men forces it upon our attention, and we hear abundant complaints of the inaccuracy of most of those around us. But few, comparatively, are aware how deeply the foundations of error are laid in the nature of language itself; and how much diligence and attention are requisite, in order to be tolerably correct in our notions, even where there is a hearty desire to avoid deceiving, or being deceived. The truth is, that language, though an instrument so beautiful that it is difficult not to suppose it of Divine invention, is and always must be, essentially imperfect. Nor is this a matter which ought at all to surprize us. It is plainly a characteristic feature in the works and ways of God, that they are not understood upon a slight inspection. The truths of natural religion are so far from presenting themselves to the understanding at the first survey of the material and moral world, that it was with difficulty the most renowned masters of wisdom, in ancient days, reached a few of the more important of them. The evidences of revealed religion are open to many plausible exceptions; and its true meaning, its sublime doctrines, its spiritual precepts, its animating promises, its heavenly consolations, are to be understood only according to the measure of sincere anxiety with which they are investigated. To the thoughtless and inattentive, the Bible is almost a sealed book. Revelation is not to be trifled with. In the providential dispensations of God in this

world the same character appears ; all is contradiction and mystery to the careless inspector : to him who diligently watches, and faithfully obeys, much is unveiled. The great Author of all things sits (as the poet sublimely expresses it,) “ unseen, behind his own creation.” And St. Paul explains to us a part of the reason for this mystery ; “ that we should seek the Lord ; if happily we may feel after him and find him ; although he be not far from any of us.” Can it, then, be a matter of astonishment to find, that the great instrument afforded to us by Providence for reflection and mutual intercourse, partakes of the same nature with his other works and dispensations ; and is it not our manifest duty to cultivate habits of vigilance, assiduity, and a practical love of truth, when every thing within us and around us so plainly calls for them ?

The Essay on the Sublime was, Mr. Stewart informs us, with the exception of a few pages, written during a summer’s residence in “ a distant part of the country, where he had no opportunity of consulting books ;” and he has thought it necessary to apologize to his readers for the selection of his illustrations ; which he apprehends “ may appear too hackneyed to be introduced into a disquisition, which it would have been desirable to enliven and adorn by examples possessing something more of the zest of novelty and variety.” We certainly are not among the number of those to whom it could be necessary to address such an apology. We are particularly fond of seeing *great* men in their undress ;

of observing what is the train of thoughts which presents itself the most naturally to their minds; and which, among the more celebrated writers, are those with whom they are most intimate. The unstudied effusions of an author present us with a far better history of his mind, and furnish a much truer indication of what are his real tastes and preferences, than his elaborate performances. Those must be incurious, indeed, who have no desire to have some acquaintance with Mr. Stewart's literary predilections; and none, we think, can be aware of the extent and variety of his acquirements, without wishing that he had more frequently indulged himself in the privilege of citing, without the fatigue of research, the passages which are most familiar to his imagination.

In the fifth chapter of this Essay, Mr. Stewart intimates an opinion, which none, doubtless, who are curious in matters of taste, will omit to notice. We say *intimates*, for his expressions are cautious: but the passages which we are about to extract seem to imply, that, in his judgment, at least as much and perhaps rather more, of the true sublime is connected with natural objects, than with sentiments and actions which possess a moral dignity.

“ Although I have attempted to shew, at some length, that there is a specific pleasure connected with the simple idea of sublimity or elevation, I am far from thinking that the impressions produced by such adjuncts as eternity or power, or even by the physical adjuncts of horizontal extent and of depth, are wholly resolvable into their associa-



tion with this common and central conception. I own, however, I am of opinion, that in most cases the pleasure attached to the conception of *literal sublimity*, identified, as it comes to be, with those religious impressions which are inseparable from the human mind, is one of the chief ingredients in the complicated emotion, and that in every case it either palpably or latently contributes to the effect." p. 411.

“ In confirmation of what I have stated concerning the primary or central idea of elevation, it may be farther remarked, that when we are anxious to communicate the highest possible character of sublimity to any thing we are describing, we generally contrive, somehow or other, either directly, or by means of some strong and obvious association, to introduce the image of the heavens or of the clouds; or, in other words, of sublimity literally so called. The idea of eloquence is undoubtedly sublime in itself, being a source of the proudest and noblest species of power which the mind of one man can exercise over those of others: but how wonderfully is its sublimity increased when connected with the image of thunder; as when we speak of the thunder of Demosthenes! “ Demosthenis non tam vibrarent fulmina, nisi numeris contorta ferrentur.” Milton has fully availed himself of both these associations, in describing the orators of the Greek republic:

‘ Resistless eloquence

Wielded at will the fierce democracy;

Shook th’ arsenal, and fulmined over Greece,

To Macedon and Artaxerxes’ throne.’—p. 413.

“ In the concluding stanza of one of Gray’s Odes, if the bard, after his apostrophe to Edward, had been represented as falling on his sword, or as drowning himself in a pool at the summit of the rock, the moral sublime, so far

as it arises from his heroic determination 'to conquer and to die,' would not have been in the least diminished; but how different from the complicated emotion produced by the images of altitude; of depth; of an impetuous and foaming flood; of darkness, and of eternity; all of which are crowded into the two last lines:

'He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height  
Deep in the roaring tide he plung'd to endless night.'

In the following well-known illustration of the superiority of the moral above the physical sublime, it is remarkable, that while the author exemplifies the latter only by the magnitude and momentum of dead masses, and by the immensity of space considered in general, he not only bestows on the former the interest of an historical painting, exhibiting the majestic and commanding expression of a Roman form, but lends it the adventitious aid of an allusion, in which the imagination is carried up to Jupiter armed with his bolt. In fact, it is not the two different kinds of sublimity which he has contrasted with each other, but a few of the constituents of the physical sublime, which he has compared in point of effect with the powers both of the physical and moral sublime, combined together in their joint operation:

'Look then abroad through nature, through the range  
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres,  
Wheeling, unshaken, through the vault immense;  
And speak, oh man, does this capacious scene,  
With half that kindling majesty dilate  
Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose  
Refulgent from the stroke of Cæsar's fate,  
Amid the crowd of patriots; and his arm  
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove,  
When guilt brings down the thunder, call'd aloud

On Tully's name, and shook his crimson steel,  
 And bade the father of his country hail!  
 For lo! the tyrant prostrate on the dust,  
 And Rome again is free?"

Much of what is insisted upon by Mr. Stewart in the above extracts, is undoubtedly true. We are far from agreeing with those, who think that objects, which are only physically sublime, exercise little or no influence upon the mind; or who can discern no grandeur in the fine mountain scenery of Wales or Scotland, without the aid of Caractacus and Ossian. Such frigid travellers are either deficient in sensibility, or eaten up with an affectation of being vastly more intellectual than their neighbours; which they manifestly are not, or they would be free from all such pedantry. We have no doubt, too, that in almost all sublime descriptions the natural images, which are employed to convey moral ideas, assist very materially in producing the general effect; and in such cases we admit that it is difficult to analyse the impressions, and assign to each the exact proportion of its influence. Yet, all this notwithstanding, we are persuaded that there is a difference in the nature of things between physical and moral sublimity, and that the latter possesses an essential superiority over the former. "The material part of the creation" (says a profound and eloquent writer\*) "was formed for the sake of the immate-

\* Discourse on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister. By Robert Hall.

rial; and of the latter the most momentous characteristic is, its moral and accountable nature, or, in other words, its capacity of virtue and vice." There is, undoubtedly, a gradation in the order of created beings; some things were made for others; and it is a self-evident proposition, that "the end must be of greater value than its means." Hooker says that "stones are in dignity of nature inferior to plants." Without attempting to settle the rights of precedence between such parties, there can be no dispute, that what is in its nature moral and everlasting *must* be of greater dignity than that which is only material and transitory. The superior excellence of the thing does not, indeed, necessarily prove that the impression which the idea of it produces shall be more sublime; but it makes it, at the least, highly probable that it will be so. And many reasons concur for believing that the fact coincides perfectly with the presumption. The most sublime of all ideas certainly is that of the Deity;—an idea which, to use the language of the same extraordinary writer whom we have before quoted\*, "borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned upon the riches of the universe." Now it is plain that the idea of God is entirely composed of moral qualities; every material image being necessarily excluded. It is plain too, that as man matures in knowledge and virtue, the power which moral impressions possess will be continually in-

\* Mr. Hall. Sermon on the Effects of Infidelity.

creasing; a truth which is, or ought to be, practically experienced by every man, as he advances in life. But physical objects possess in the nature of things only a fixed value. The superiority of moral over physical sublimity may also, we think, be satisfactorily inferred from the powerful influence which the higher sorts of poetry exercise upon the mind, compared with natural scenery and painting. The principal advantage of the former consists in the facility it possesses of presenting moral ideas to the imagination. In the power of placing before the mind the images of natural things, it is evidently greatly inferior, not only to original nature, but also to every graphical imitation of her. Nor is it any reply to this to say, that the moral images which poetry commands are superadded to its descriptive powers. Moral images are unquestionably associated also with scenery and landscapes. The difference is, that in these, natural objects are presented to the mind with great vividness, and moral ideas only faintly; in poetry, moral ideas are powerfully portrayed, and sensible objects are drawn but indistinctly.

To bring this question as closely as may be to the test of experiment, let us take a passage, the effect of which is as great as can well be conceived of any uninspired production, and which unites in a peculiar manner images of the highest natural and moral sublimity. Take the celebrated description of Satan in the first book of the *Paradise Lost*,



“ Thus far these beyond  
 Compare of mortal prowess, yet observed  
 Their dread commander: he, above the rest  
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent,  
 Stood like a tower: his form had not yet lost  
 All her original brightness, nor appeared  
 Less than archangel ruined, and th’ excess  
 Of glory obscured. As when the sun new risen,  
 Looks through the horizontal misty air  
 Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon  
 In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds  
 On half the nations, and with fear of change  
 Perplexes monarchs; darkened so, yet shone  
 Above them all th’ archangel; but his face  
 Deep scars of thunder had entrenched, and care  
 Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows  
 Of dauntless courage and considerate pride  
 Waiting revenge. Cruel his eye, but cast  
 Signs of remorse and passion to behold  
 The fellows of his crime, the followers rather,  
 (Far other once beheld in bliss,) condemned  
 For ever now to have their lot in pain;  
 Millions of spirits for his crime amerced  
 Of heaven, and from eternal splendours flung  
 For his revolt; yet faithful how they stood,  
 Their glory withered; as when heaven’s fire  
 Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,  
 With singed top their stately growth tho’ bare  
 Stands on the blasted heath.”

In this noble description, Milton has collected some of the most sublime images which the sensible world supplies;—a tower; the sun new risen; the sun in eclipse; and the oak and pine blasted with the lightning. All these are thrown together to

swell the dignity of the scene: and in the midst stands the awful figure of the archangel himself. But it is the figure of the archangel “*ruined;*” and that single word is so powerful that it almost effaces, alone, every other impression. The moral sublimity of the ideas which accompany it; the despair, the cruelty, the feeling, the sufferings of Satan; the unshaken fidelity and irrevocable misery of his followers; is altogether so great, that the natural images, lofty as they are, seem to us to borrow all their grandeur from the associations which attend them. We should have little fear in trusting by far the largest portion of the more celebrated passages in the great poets to the same experimental test.

Indeed, it appears to us to be far less questionable whether that which is morally sublime be essentially superior to that which is naturally sublime, than whether the rule which prevails in this instance hold true also with respect to the beautiful. It may be doubted if there are not some forms of visible beauty so enchanting, that no image of moral excellence would be capable of producing at once an equal effect. Dr. Akenside, however, does not admit even of this doubt:

“ Is aught so fair

In all the dewy landscapes of the spring,  
 In the bright eye of Hesper or the Morn;  
 In nature’s fairest forms is aught so fair,  
 As virtuous friendship; as the candid blush  
 Of him who strives with fortune to be just;  
 The graceful tear that streams for others’ woes;  
 Or the mild majesty of private life?”

The poet, perhaps, is right; at least we are not disposed to enter the lists against him. We incline, however, to think, that the expression of the beautiful in the works of nature is, if we may so speak, more characteristic and more complete than the expression of the sublime. The eye reposes with unwearied delight on the landscapes of Claude; but the sketches of Salvator owe much to the imagination of the beholder;—a fact of which that master was doubtless sensible when he threw in the wild *farouche* figures which appear in his Alpine scenery, and which were evidently intended to assist the fancy in her conception of what is terrible. The explanation of this is probably to be found in the effect of colours.—It is a little curious that Mr. Stewart, who seems disposed to contend for the superior effect of the physical over the moral sublime, declares it to be his opinion that female beauty (which he describes to be “the master-piece of nature’s handy work,”) owes its powers of enchantment rather to the moral associations with which it is surrounded by the young admirer, than to the charms of form and colour.

We cannot leave this subject without observing, that any theory respecting the beautiful, which professes to explain our agreeable impressions by the principle of associations alone, must be radically erroneous. It involves (as Mr. Stewart has justly and acutely remarked) a manifest absurdity. Unless some perceptions be supposed which are originally pleasing, there is nothing on which the associating

principle can act. There can be no accumulation without a capital. Objects there are, then, undoubtedly, which derive their agreeable effect from the "organical adaptation of the human frame to the external universe." But we are disposed to contend for a great deal more than this. We think there is a similar adaptation of truth to our intellectual faculties, and of virtue to our moral feelings. We do not deny, nor for a moment doubt, the disturbance and depravation of both, which our nature has suffered in the fall of our first parents. There is enough of obscurity in the understanding, and of corruption in the heart, to overpower, without the special grace of God exciting and aiding our own unremitting endeavours, whatever is good and tending to perfection in either. Yet surely it is true that the mind has naturally a thirst for knowledge; and that generosity, benevolence, disinterestedness, fortitude, are beheld with general approbation. Indolence, or a love of pleasure, may be so powerful as to prevent us from making a progress in the pursuit of truth. Selfishness, and the indulgence of evil passions, will soon choke up the springs of every good and noble affection. But unless we suppose some tendency towards perfection to be still inherent in our nature, some traces of our original greatness, some lineaments of our divine origin, how shall we explain the preference which has been shewn in all ages for those actions which tend to the general good, over those which have for their object the advancement of an individual? How

shall we explain the efforts made by so many wise and great men in ancient times, to disperse the darkness around them, and penetrate into that purer region, where they might contemplate the true images of God and virtue? How shall we explain that noble aphorism of the old philosophy, that “vice is more contrary to the nature of man, than pain, and sickness, and death, and all the evils which can besiege mortality?” Certainly it was not intended to assert that man is, in the common sense of the words, naturally virtuous. The whole world supplies but too sad and convincing evidence to the contrary. What was intended must evidently have been this, that virtue is the proper perfection of man’s moral nature; that vice is destructive of the soul, as disease and death are of the body; and that (the soul being far more excellent and permanent than the body) whatever is fatal to the former, is more truly *contrary to his nature* than those things which assail only the latter: —a truth so momentous, and, in the opinion of Bishop Butler (surely no mean judge), so manifest, that it has been adopted by that profound writer as the simplest practical basis of all ethical science\*.

There are two other Essays in this volume which still remain to be considered. The first of these is upon *Taste*; the second on the *Culture of certain intellectual Habits*.

What is Taste? This is a question which has a

\* See the Introduction to Butler’s Sermons.



good deal divided the literary and philosophical world. Dr. Blair defines it to be “ a power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art.” Dr. Akenside expresses nearly the same idea in verse :

“ What then is taste, but these internal powers,  
Active and strong, and feelingly alive  
To each fine impulse?”

According to both these writers, taste is nearly, or exactly, synonymous with sensibility. Mr. Burke objected, long ago, to these and similar definitions; and Mr. Stewart has satisfactorily shewn that they are erroneous. Taste and sensibility are certainly not conceived to be synonymous terms in the common apprehensions of mankind. Sensibility is often possessed, even to excess, by persons who are very deficient in taste. And those exercises, which, from the constitution of our nature, have a tendency rather to impair the former, are continually enlarging and perfecting the latter.

Mr. Stewart's account of this power is to the following effect. In objects presented to the mind, an indefinite variety of circumstances may concur in producing that agreeable impression to which we give the name of Beauty. Yet the impression, as far as our consciousness can judge of it, is simple and uncompounded. It is impossible, then, for the most acute sensibility, united with the greatest sagacity, to say, upon a single experiment, what are the circumstances in the supposed object to which

we are chiefly indebted for the agreeable impression produced; what those, if any, that may be considered as neutral; and what those which tend to diminish and injure the general effect. It is only by watching attentively a great variety of experiments upon different things, that we can arrive at that discriminating knowledge, which enables us to separate, in every expression, those circumstances which have been favourable to the general result, from those which have been injurious to it. This power of discrimination we call Taste. It supposes, of necessity, some sensibility to pleasure and pain; but it is formed to the perfection in which we see it often possessed, chiefly by diligence in multiplying, and accuracy in watching, those intellectual experiments, from whence the materials, which inform and exercise it, are supplied.

This account of the nature and formation of taste appears to us to be, in the main, sufficiently correct. It ought, however, to be accompanied with an observation, which is much too obvious to have escaped Mr. Stewart's notice, but with which he has not expressly qualified his theory. Although taste is originally formed by a process, such as has been described, yet, in a polite age, a very large proportion of the principles, adopted by those who have cultivated it with the greatest success, are not derived from experiments actually made, but are received upon the authority of earlier masters, and, at the most, are only verified by the personal experience of those who embrace them.

The view which Sir Joshua Reynolds long since took of this subject, accords very nearly with that which Mr. Stewart has more fully opened.

“The real substance,” he observes, “of what goes under the name of Taste, is fixed and established in the nature of things. There are certain and regular causes by which the imagination and the passions of men are affected; and the knowledge of these causes is acquired by a laborious and diligent investigation of nature, and by the same slow progress as wisdom or knowledge of every kind, however instantaneous its operation may appear when thus acquired.”

Perhaps the process by which taste is originally formed, may be rendered more intelligible by considering how any one acquires what is called a perfect ear in music. Suppose a concerto of Mozart, or of Corelli, to be performed: some natural sensibility to the beauty of musical sounds being supposed (as it is found in fact to exist in a great majority of instances,) the general impression which is made upon the hearer will be gratifying. But upon a single experiment, probably no person, entirely unpractised in music, could say more than that he received, on the whole, considerable pleasure. Suppose the same piece to be frequently repeated: he will perceive that he receives different degrees of pleasure, and pleasures also of different kinds from distinct parts of the piece. Let the same person hear a great variety of other musical compositions; and if he is vigilant in observing his impressions, and compares the parts of the several pieces which

afford him the greatest or the least gratification, he will gradually acquire considerable correctness and delicacy in perceiving the excellencies and the blemishes of the various passages to which he listens. Then comes the musical *philosopher* (Rameau would doubtless claim this dignity for his favourite science,) and explains many of the causes of those perceptions which the *amateur* has experienced. He tells him, that in such a part his ear was offended by the introduction of too many discords into the harmony; that in another it was wearied by too monotonous a system of concords; that here the cadences are finely managed (explaining the principle;) there the transition into a different key is too sudden; and he talks learnedly to him about sharp sevenths and fundamental basses. If the amateur has the fortune to have a tolerable head as well as an ear, he understands a good deal of what is taught him, and finds that, by the help of this new knowledge, the experiments which he makes are much more profitable than they had been; that is, he observes many slight impressions which had before escaped him, and has a more perfect knowledge of those which he had already noticed. His judgment also receives great assistance from the opinions which he hears from others who have made a progress in his art, and from the rules adopted or favoured by the most celebrated masters; and thus, by degrees, with nothing but an ordinary good ear and a plain understanding to begin with, may any person become a very skilful connoisseur in every species of

musical composition, and acquire so critical a nicety in his perception of sounds, as to be able to detect a single false note in the midst of the most noisy and complicated performance. The process by which taste is acquired in any of the sister arts, certainly is not very different.

If the account which has been given of the manner in which our taste is formed, be tolerably correct, it follows, that justness and comprehension of understanding are more indispensably requisite for the enjoyment of that power in great perfection, than a superior delicacy in our original perceptions. Madame de Stahl appears to have caught a glimpse of this truth, when she says of the hero of one of her works, that the extent of his understanding enabled him to act with propriety, into whatever circle of society he was introduced. Indeed, Mr. Stewart has pushed his theory so far as to insist, that great natural sensibility is unfavourable to the formation of a good taste. Instances illustrative of this opinion will probably crowd upon the recollection of our readers ; and as it is favourable to mediocrity, there is danger of its becoming very popular. It is proper, therefore, to state, that the disadvantages to which persons of great natural sensibility are said to be subjected in respect of taste, are exactly of the same kind with the difficulties which oppose perfection in every other department. Persons who have been blessed with fine parts are sometimes deficient in judgment ; but it is not because they possess distinguished faculties, but because they abuse



them. All taste has its origin in sensibility ; but exquisite sensibility requires to be controlled in matters of taste; as in every thing else; by a vigilance and intelligence proportioned to its vivacity.

The Essay on Taste is divided into four chapters, of which only the first two are employed in the analysis of that power;—the two latter chapters are filled with miscellaneous observations nearly connected with the same subject. At the close of the second chapter, Mr. Stewart expresses an intention of resuming the subject on some future occasion, for the purpose of illustrating that “ progress of taste from rudeness to refinement which accompanies the advancement of social civilization.” We trust he will find opportunity to fulfil the expectations which such a hope awakens.

It is not possible for us to present our readers with all the valuable truths and suggestions which Mr. Stewart has collected in his two latter chapters upon taste; but the following passage deserves to be extracted, as well on account of the dignity and justness of the sentiments which it expresses, as of the peculiar felicity of the diction.

“ Corresponding to the distinction which I have been attempting to illustrate between universal and arbitrary beauties, there are too different modifications of taste; modifications which are not *always* united (perhaps *seldom* united) in the same person. The one enables a writer or an artist to rise superior to the times in which he lives, and emboldens him to trust his reputation to the suffrages of the human race, and of the ages which are yet to come.

The other is the foundation of that humbler, though more profitable sagacity, which teaches the possessor how to suit his manufactures to the market; to judge before-hand of the reception which any new production is to meet with, and to regulate his exertions accordingly. The one must be cultivated by the habits of abstraction and study, which by withdrawing the thoughts from the unmeaning particularities of individual perception, and the capricious drapery of conventional manners, familiarise the mind *to the general forms of beautiful nature*; or to beauties which the classical genius of antiquity has copied from *these*, and which, like *these*, are unfading and immortal. The proper sphere of the other, is such a capital as London or Paris. It is there that the judges are to be found from whose decision it acknowledges no appeal; and it is in such a situation alone that it can be cultivated with advantage. Dr. Johnson has well described (in a prologue spoken by Garrick, when he first opened the theatre at Drury-lane,) the trifling solitudes and the ever-varying attentions to which those are doomed, who submit thus to be the ministers and slaves of public folly:—

‘ Hard is *his* fate who here by fortune placed  
Must watch the wild vicissitudes of taste;  
With every meteor of caprice must play,  
And catch the new-blown bubbles of the day.’

The ground-work of this last species of taste (if it deserves the name) is a certain *facility of association*, acquired by early and constant intercourse with society; more particularly with those classes of society who are looked up to as supreme legislators in matters of fashion; a habit of mind, the tendency of which is to render the sense of the beautiful (as well as the sense of what is right and wrong) easily susceptible of modification from the contagion of example. It is a habit by no means inconsistent with a

certain degree of original sensibility; nay, it requires, perhaps, some original sensibility as its basis: but this sensibility, in consequence of the habit which it has itself contributed to establish, soon becomes transient and useless; losing all connection with reason and the moral principles, and alive only to such impressions as fashion recognizes and sanctions. The other species of taste, founded on the study of universal beauty, (and which, for the sake of distinction, I shall call *philosophical taste*,) implies a sensibility deep and permanent to those objects of affection, admiration, and reverence, which interested the youthful heart, while yet a stranger to the opinions and ways of the world. Its most distinguishing characteristics, accordingly, are strong domestic and local attachments, accompanied with that enthusiastic love of nature, simplicity, and truth, which, in every department both of art and science, is the best and surest presage of genius. It is this sensibility that gives rise to the habits of attentive observation by which such a taste can alone be formed; and it is this also that, binding and perpetuating the associations which such a taste supposes, fortifies the mind against the fleeting caprices which the votaries of fashion watch and obey." pp. 470—471.

The essential inferiority of *arbitrary* to *universal* associations, in all works of taste, is sufficiently established by the concurrent suffrages of mankind. Numberless illustrations of this fact present themselves, the instant it is stated, to every person who is at all conversant with the literary productions of different ages. But perhaps a more remarkable instance of its truth could hardly be found than is supplied by the writings of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. The latter of these had at one time so nearly super-

seduced his master in the general favour, that Dryden, in his Essay on Dramatic Poetry, considers himself as exposed to a charge of presumption in venturing to claim even an *equality* for his beloved Shakspeare; and he seems to have thought it necessary to accompany the expression of so bold a judgment with an extravagant encomium on the *Silent Woman* of Jonson, which has probably seduced many an unhappy reader into a perusal of that very ordinary performance. Time, however, has reversed the judgments of fashion; the caprices of an age of pedantry are past; and truth and nature have resumed their legitimate authority.

It must not be supposed that all arbitrary associations are equally frivolous. Some of them are of far greater value than others; and there are two classes among them which may be said even to partake of universality. Mr. Stewart has named them 1. *Classical Associations*; and 2. *National or Local Associations*. Of the power which the first of these possess, under the direction of a skilful hand, no one who is fully sensible of the beauties of Milton's poetry can be ignorant. Mr. Burke's works abound in similar allusions. The following, among numberless others, has always struck us as exquisitely beautiful:—speaking of the wars of 1796-7, in Italy, he names the Mincio, “*who now hides his head in his reeds, and leads his slow and melancholy windings along banks wasted by the barbarians of Gaul.*” The power of classical associations is probably felt much more strongly by men than by wo-

men, in consequence of the different courses of education pursued by them. We are persuaded also, that the pleasure felt by many who delight in references to the ancient writers, arises less from a keen relish for their beauties, than from those fond recollections of the days of youth, and hope, and gaiety, with which they are insensibly accompanied. The effect of national and local associations, though limited in its extent, is so considerable within its own sphere, and allïes itself so powerfully to some of the best affections of our nature, that it would be an unpardonable cruelty to attempt to diminish their influence. The emotions to which a feeling heart is peculiarly sensible are surely among the most genuine elements of poetry :

“ He dreamed on Alpine heights of Athol’s hill,  
And heard in Ebro’s roar his Lynedock’s lovely rill.”

It is justly observed by Mr. Stewart, that the cultivation of a fine taste not only enables us to enjoy more perfectly those *primary pleasures* which its appropriate objects afford, but superadds to these a *secondary pleasure* peculiar to itself and of no inconsiderable value. This arises from a perception of the skill and taste as well as the genius which is exhibited in a performance. Both statuary and painting are greatly indebted to this circumstance for the applauses they receive. The finer touches of the chisel and pencil, which an ordinary eye wholly overlooks, are beheld with rapture by those who have cultivated the arts. Even in poetry how



much of the admiration so justly paid to Virgil, Tasso, Boileau, and Pope, may be resolved into the same principle. Indeed, the pleasure which attends the contemplation of whatever is perfect, or which nearly approaches to perfection, seems peculiarly to belong to a being who is, or ought to be, in a state of continual progression. Nothing, perhaps, is so distinctive of a really superior character, as a just and lively perception of excellence wherever it is to be found.

The topic last mentioned leads Mr. Stewart to notice those technical rules which critics in different ages, from Aristotle to Bossu, have laboured to establish for the direction of authors. To these he does not attach any great value; and we concur with him in that opinion. They may save little men from committing great extravagancies, but are seldom much regarded by bolder minds; like crutches, which support the weak, and are an incumbrance to the strong. After making a few observations on what he calls a technical correctness of taste, Mr. Stewart proceeds in the following manner. The extract we are about to make is long; but it will give to our readers a better opportunity of observing his general style of composition than we have yet afforded them, and the observations which it contains are interesting and valuable.

“ There is another species of taste, (unquestionably of a higher order than the technical taste we have been now considering,) which is insensibly acquired by a diligent and habitual study of the most approved and consecrated

standards of excellence; and which, in pronouncing its critical judgments, is secretly and often unconsciously guided by an idolatrous comparison of what it sees with the works of its favorite masters. This, I think, approaches nearly to what La Bruyere calls *le gout de comparaison*. It is that kind of taste which commonly belongs to the *connoisseur* in painting; and to which some thing analogous may be remarked in all the other fine arts.

“A person possessed of this sort of taste, if he should be surpassed in the correctness of his judgment by the technical critic, is much more likely to recognize the beauties of a new work, by their resemblance to those which are familiar to his memory; or if he should himself attempt the task of execution, and possesses powers equal to that task, he may possibly, without any clear conception of his own merits, rival the original he has been accustomed to admire. It was said by an ancient critic, that in reading Seneca it was impossible not to wish that he had written ‘with the taste of another person, though with his own genius’—*suo ingenio alieno judicio*;—and we find, in fact, that many who have failed as original writers, have seemed to surpass themselves, when they attempted to imitate. Warburton has remarked, and, in my opinion with some truth, that Burke himself never wrote so well as when he imitated Bolingbroke. If, on other occasions, he soared higher than in his *Vindication of Natural Society*, he has certainly no where else (I speak at present merely of the style of his composition) sustained himself so long upon a steady wing. I do not, however, agree with Warburton in thinking, that this implied any defect in Mr. Burke’s genius, connected with that faculty of *imitation* which he so eminently possessed. The defect lay in his taste, which, when left to itself, without the guidance of an acknowledged standard of excellence, appears not only to

have been warped by some peculiar notions concerning the art of writing; but to have been too wavering and versatile, to keep his imagination and his fancy (stimulated, as they were, by an ostentation of his intellectual riches, and by an ambition of Asiatic ornament,) under due control. With the composition of Bolingbroke present to his thoughts, he has shewn with what ease he could equal its most finished beauties; while, on more than one occasion, a consciousness of his own strength has led him to display his superiority, by brandishing, in his sport, still heavier weapons than his master was able to wield.

“ To one or other of these two classes, the taste of most professed critics will be found to belong: and it is evident, that they both exist where there is little or no sensibility to beauty. That genuine and native taste, the origin and growth of which I attempted to describe in the last chapter, is perhaps one of the rarest acquisitions of the human mind: nor will this appear surprizing to those who consider with attention the combination of original qualities which it implies; the accidental nature of many of the circumstances which must conspire to afford due opportunities for its improvement; and the persevering habits of discriminating observation by which it is formed. It occurs, indeed, in its most perfect state, as seldom as originality of genius; and when united with industry, and with moderate powers of execution, it will go farther in such an age as the present, to secure success in the arts with which it is conversant, than the utmost fertility of invention, where the taste is unformed or perverted.

“ With respect to this *native* or *indigenous* taste, it is particularly worthy of observation, that it is always more strongly disposed to the enjoyment of *beauties* than to the detection of blemishes. It is, indeed, by a quick and lively perception of the former, accompanied with a spirit of candour and indulgence towards the latter, that its ex-

istence in the mind of any individual is most unequivocally marked. It is this perception which can alone evince that sensibility of temperament, of which a certain portion, although it does not of itself constitute taste; is nevertheless, the just and most essential element in its composition; while it evinces, at the same time, those habits of critical observation and cool reflection, which, allowing no impression, how slight soever, to pass unnoticed, seem to awaken a new sense of beauty, and to *create* that delicacy of feeling which they only *disclose*. We are told of Saunderson, the blind mathematician, that in a series of Roman medals he could distinguish, by his hand, the true from the counterfeit, with a more unerring discrimination than the eye of a professed virtuoso; and we are assured by his biographer, Mr. Colson, that when he was present at the astronomical observations, in the garden of his college, he was accustomed to remark every cloud that passed over the sun. The effect of the blindness of this extraordinary person was not surely to produce any organical change in his other perceptive powers. It served only to quicken his attention to those slighter perceptions of touch, which are overlooked by men to whom they convey no useful information. The case, I conceive, to be perfectly analagous in matters which fall under the cognizance of intellectual taste. Where nature has denied all sensibility to beauty, no study or instruction can supply the defect; but it may be possible, nevertheless, by awakening the attention to things neglected before, to develop a latent sensibility where none was suspected to exist. In all men, indeed without exception, whether their natural sensibility be strong or weak, it is by such habits of attention alone to the finer feelings of their own minds, that the power of taste can acquire all the delicacy of which it is susceptible.

“ While this cultivated sensibility enlarges so widely, to

the man who possesses it, the pleasures of taste, it has a tendency, wherever it is gratified and delighted in a high degree, to avert his critical eye from blemishes and imperfections;—not because he is unable to remark them, but because he can appreciate the merits by which they are redeemed, and loves to enjoy the beauties in which they are lost. A taste thus awake to the beautiful, seizes eagerly on every touch of genius with the sympathy of kindred affection; and in the secret consciousness of a congenial inspiration, shares, in some measure, the triumph of the artist. The faults which have escaped him, it views with the partiality of friendship; and willingly abandons the censorial office to those who exult in the errors of superior minds, as their appropriate and easy prey.

“ Nor is this indulgent spirit towards the works of others at all inconsistent with the most rigid severity in an author towards his own. On the contrary, both are the natural consequences of that discriminating power of taste, on which I have already enlarged as one of its most important characteristics. Where men of little discernment attend only to general effects, confounding beauties and blemishes, flowers and weeds, in one gross and undistinguishing perception, a man of quick sensibility and cultivated judgment, detaches, in a moment, the one from the other; rejects, in imagination, whatever is offensive in the prospect; and enjoys, without alloy, whatever is fitted to please. His taste, in the mean time, is refined and confirmed by the exercise: and, while it multiplies the sources of his gratification, in proportion to the latent charms which it detects, becomes itself, as the arbiter and guide of his own genius, more scrupulous and inflexible than before.

“ ‘ The tragedy of Douglas’ (says Gray in one of his letters) ‘ has infinite faults; but there is one scene (that between Matilda and the old peasant) so masterly, that it



strikes me blind to all the defects of the piece.' These, I apprehend, are the natural impressions of genuine taste in pronouncing on the merits of works of genuine excellence; impressions, however, which they who are conscious of them have not always the courage either to indulge or to avow.—Such, also, was the feeling which dictated the memorable precept of la Bruyere, of which I will not impair the force by attempting a translation: “Quand une lecture vous élève l'esprit, et qu'elle vous inspire des sentimens nobles et courageux, ne cherchez pas une autre règle pour juger de l'ouvrage; il est bon, et fait de main d'ouvrier.”—How different both sentiments from that fastidiousness of taste, by an affectation of which, it is usual for little minds to court the reputation of superior refinement!

“In producing, however, this fastidiousness, whether affected or real, various *moral* causes—such as jealousy, rivalry, personal dislike, or the spleen of conscious inferiority—may conspire with the *intellectual* defects which have been mentioned: nay, the same moral causes may be conceived to be so powerful in their influence, as to produce this unfortunate effect, in spite of every intellectual gift which nature and education can bestow. It is observed by Shenstone, that ‘good taste and good nature are inseparably united;’ and although the observation is by no means true, when thus stated as an unqualified proposition, it will be found to have a sufficient foundation in fact, to deserve the attention of those who have a pleasure in studying the varieties of human character. One thing is certain, that as an habitual deficiency in good humour is sufficient to warp the decisions of the soundest taste, so the taste of an individual, in proportion as it appears to be free from capricious biases, affords a strong presumption that the temper is unsuspecting, open, and generous. As the habits besides, which contribute spontaneously to the formation of taste, all originate in the desire of intellectual

gratification, this power, where it is possessed in an eminent degree, may be regarded as a symptom of that general disposition to be pleased and happy, in which the essence of good-nature consists. ‘ In those vernal seasons of the year, (says Milton in one of the finest sentences of his prose writings,) ‘ when the air is soft and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against nature, not to go out and see her riches, and partake of her rejoicings with heaven and earth.’ Such is the temper of mind, by which, in our early years, those habits which form the ground work of taste are most likely to be formed; and such precisely is the temper which, in our intercourse with our fellow-creatures, disposes us, both for their sakes and for our own, to view their actions and characters on the fairest side. I need scarcely add, in confirmation of some remarks formerly made, that the same temper, when transferred from the observation of nature to the study of the fine arts, can scarcely fail to incline the taste more strongly to the side of admiration than of censure.”—pp. 481—488.

There is a great deal of moral instruction, as well as of just critical observation, contained in the passages which we have here extracted. Reviewers perhaps, of all men, need most to be reminded of the intimate union which exists between good taste and good nature. We hope to be able to recollect this truth ourselves; and we earnestly recommend it to the attention of all other journalists.

Mr. Stewart’s fourth Essay, on “ the Culture of certain intellectual Habits connected with the first Elements of Taste,” though considerably shorter than those which precede it, is by no means less valuable in proportion to its length; but this

article has already grown to a size, which makes it impossible for us to enter into a full examination of its contents. Two opinions, however, which are here advanced, well deserve to be mentioned. Mr. Stewart insists, at some length, that the powers of the imagination, instead of diminishing while we advance in life, become stronger and stronger as the judgment improves, and as our knowledge becomes more extensive. Sir Joshua Reynolds has in like manner ridiculed, as a contemptible prejudice, the common idea, that "imagination begins to grow dim in advanced age, smothered and deadened by too much judgment." And Dr. Johnson, in his preface to Shakspeare, has expressed an opinion in substance exceedingly similar. These authorities are great, and the theory which they maintain is exceedingly pleasing. Cicero ventures even further, insisting in the person of Cato, that the decay of memory in old age is only the consequence of inactivity.

We feel a little embarrassed with this question. There is a great deal of very plausible reasoning, which may be urged in favour of Mr. Stewart's opinion; but we could marshal a melancholy array of facts in opposition to it. The truth seems to be, that there is nothing in the constitution of our nature which prevents the imagination from acquiring force, year after year, in proportion to the activity with which it is exerted, and the accumulation of riches which may minister to its expense. But in a busy community certainly, and perhaps in every

state of society, the habits of life are so exceedingly unfavourable to the improvement of the more elevated and creative faculties of the mind, that the ordinary opinion upon the subject, though resting upon an unphilosophical foundation, is, for practical purposes, sufficiently correct. Some, however, there are in every age, who triumph over the obstacles which our present imperfect condition opposes to the improvement of our intellectual powers; and where the principles of our nature, and the examples of its best patterns, concur to shew, that the disadvantages with which we have to contend are not insuperable, surely it is both wise and manly to exert our best energies to overcome them.

The other opinion to which we have alluded is so original, and so exceedingly important, with a view to the education of young persons, that we shall make no apology for giving it in Mr. Stewart's own words. It occupies the last two pages of his work.

“Imagination herself furnishes the most effectual of all remedies against those errors of which she was in the first instance the cause. In proportion to the number and diversity of the objects to which she turns her attention, the dangers are diminished which are apt to arise from her illusions when they are suffered always to run in the same channel; and in this manner, while the sources of enjoyment become more copious and varied, the concomitant pains and inconveniences disappear.

“This conclusion coincides with a remark in that chapter of the *Philosophy of the Human Mind* which relates to the imagination,—that by a frequent and habitual exercise of this faculty, we at once cherish its vigour, and bring it

more and more under our command, 'as we can withdraw the attention at pleasure from objects of sense, and transport ourselves into a world of our own, so, when we wish to moderate our enthusiasm, we can dismiss the objects of imagination, and return to our ordinary perceptions and occupations. But in a mind to which these intellectual visions are not familiar, and which borrows them completely from the genius of another, imagination, when once excited, becomes perfectly ungovernable, and produces something like a temporary insanity.'—'Hence I have added the wonderful effects of popular eloquence on the lower orders; effects which are much more remarkable than what it produces on men of education.'

"In the history of imagination, nothing appears to me more interesting than the fact stated in the foregoing passage; suggesting plainly this practical lesson, that the early and systematical culture of this faculty, while it is indispensably necessary to its future strength and activity, is the most effectual of all expedients for subjecting it, in the more serious concerns of life, to the supremacy of our rational powers. And, in truth, I apprehend it will be found, that by accustoming it in childhood to a frequent change of its object, (one set of illusions being continually suffered to efface the impressions of another,) the understanding may be more successfully invigorated than by any precepts addressed directly to itself; and the terrors of the nursery, where they have unfortunately overclouded the infant mind, gradually and insensibly dispelled in the first dawning of reason. The *momentary belief* with which the visions of imagination are always accompanied, and upon which many of its pleasures depend, will continue unshaken; while that *permanent or habitual belief*, which they are apt to produce, where it gains the ascendant over our noble principles, will vanish for ever." pp 534, 535.



The views here suggested by Mr. Stewart, are, we believe, considerably at variance with the practice of many pious and most respectable persons in this country, who think a far more cautious system than that which he recommends, expedient in the institution of youthful minds. It deserves, however, to be seriously considered, whether the ordinary practice has not been established upon contracted and erroneous views of human nature; and whether it does not, in effect, augment the evil which it proposes to correct. We beg, however, not to be understood as expressing at present an opinion upon this subject. It is our intention, when a convenient opportunity shall offer, to examine it more at large. In the mean time, we think it but just to say, that Mr. Stewart's experience and authority, in concurrence with the reasoning contained in our last extract, entitle his suggestions to the serious and impartial attention of every person who is placed in the relation of a parent or preceptor.

We have now brought our general survey of this work to a close; and Mr. Stewart cannot himself be more sensible than we are, of the imperfect justice that has been rendered to him.

It is impossible to retrace in thought the subjects discussed in this valuable volume, and the great variety of striking remarks, apt illustrations, and original authorities, which are employed to dignify and embellish every dissertation, without being impressed with a profound respect for the talents and

acquirements of the writer. Men seldom perform better than when they have occasion to defend themselves ; and perhaps the resources of Mr. Stewart's mind are, in no part of this work, displayed to more advantage, than in the second Preliminary Dissertation, which contains a Reply to the Strictures of the Edinburgh Reviewers. Among the Essays, we think that on the Philological Speculations of Mr. Tooke, and the last two on Taste and certain intellectual Habits connected with it, are the most valuable.

Of Mr. Stewart's philosophical powers and attainments it is difficult to speak too highly. Few men have ever brought to any science a mind so comprehensive, so accurate, and so perfectly free from all prejudice of system or authority. His acquaintance with the metaphysical writers of different countries is probably more extensive than that of any other man of the present age, or in those which are past. His literary acquirements are also very considerable, both in our own and in the French languages. With the latter he appears to be more familiar than we could have expected in one, whose life has been principally employed in abstract researches. We recollect, indeed, no modern work which shews a more general insight into French literature ; and there are parts which indicate a critical acquaintance with the language. To the Italian writers he rarely refers ; but it would be rash to conclude from thence, that he is imperfectly acquainted with the productions of that

country ; for nothing is more characteristic of the writings of this great man, than an entire absence of all ostentation, and a certain air of simplicity, which is equally philosophical, pleasing, and instructive.

No man is better entitled than Mr. Stewart to speak with authority on the subject of English composition. He is, like all fine writers, a *purist*. Yet, instead of affecting that extreme nicety in the selection of words and phrases, for which some of the Scotch writers are remarkable, and which gives to their works the air of composition in a foreign language, we find him boldly and freely adopting the use of *mixed metaphors*; which he insists it is childish to reject, where custom has consecrated them, “merely on account of the inconsistencies which a philosophical analysis may point out between their primitive import and their popular acceptance.” There is, perhaps, no part of composition, in which a finer *tact* is requisite, than in the use of expressions which involve an obvious incongruity, but which, for want of convenient substitutes, have been sanctioned by the authority of our best models. Nothing, certainly, is more discreditab!e to a man’s understanding, than that ill-assorted and confused medley of ideas, with which the fancy is harassed in the more flowery passages of bad writers. Yet we entirely agree with Mr. Stewart, that there is an opposite pedantry, which has of late become very common, in affecting to write more correctly than Swift and Dryden: and

we are persuaded, that a man might as well expect to ride gracefully by studying the equilibrium of forces, as to compose finely, merely by consulting the lights of etymology.

In the Essay on Mr. Tooke's Speculations, there is a good deal of delicate criticism on the true import of certain English words. We recollect only a single instance in which we differ from Mr. Stewart. The word *interval*, he insists, can only be correctly used with reference to time; surely it is not inaccurate to say, that at the battle of Belgrade, Eugene was nearly defeated from a considerable *interval* being left between the right wing and the centre.

Our readers will probably be pleased to know something of the opinions which Mr. Stewart expresses of different writers. We think he indicates (as it was natural to expect,) a clear preference of Dr. Reid before all other metaphysicians. Berkeley's genius he admires; but he rejects his principal theory. Of Locke he speaks more coldly. He does not appear to estimate highly the metaphysical pretensions of Mr. Hume or of Mr. Horne Tooke; and Hartley, Priestley, and Darwin, are treated with very little respect. Among the French metaphysicians, De Gerando seems to be Mr. Stewart's favourite, and after him D'Alembert. Of the writings of Kant and his followers he professes to know little, and does not appear to think himself likely to obtain any new lights in the science of mind by knowing more.



Mr. Stewart invariably speaks of Lord Bacon with the most profound reverence. His praise of both Burke and Johnson is high, but by no means unqualified. The modern poets whom he quotes the most frequently, are Milton, Gray, Akenside, and the Abbé de Lille.

Those who are acquainted with Mr. Stewart's former writings will not need to be informed, that his style is remarkable for clearness, elegance, and comprehension. We think him, on the whole, the finest writer that Scotland has produced, and the first *philosophical* writer in the English language. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a style more admirably adapted to his subject than Mr. Stewart's. The present volume exhibits more instances of haste in its composition than his former metaphysical work; and its texture is more loose, both in the order of the arguments, and the structure of the sentences. In the latter parts, too, it is rather more ornate. As a specimen of fine writing, it is perhaps less perfect; but we do not think it less elegant or less agreeable.

It would be an injustice to Mr. Stewart, as well as very little satisfactory to our feelings, were we to dismiss this volume without saying a few words on its religious and moral character. The subjects treated in it evidently do not allow of a frequent reference to such topics; but they are never avoided where the train of observation approaches to them, and never touched but with the reverence which is justly their due. In the Essay on Sublimity, Mr.



Stewart introduces several quotations from the sacred writings as illustrations of his theory; and he frequently refers, in the language of unaffected veneration, to that awful Being, who is the centre of whatever is truly sublime and excellent. In the more metaphysical parts of his work, we find him strenuously combating, and even scornfully rejecting, the dangerous theories of the materialists, the artful insinuations of Mr. Tooke, and the plausible and licentious scepticism of Hume. Nor do we recollect to have met with a single passage in the whole volume, which can favour a dangerous illusion, or leave behind it an impression unfavourable to the best interests of virtue and religion.

On the whole, we lay down this volume with sentiments of the sincerest respect for the writer. It indicates, in every page, a mind studious of truth; unwearied in its pursuit; alive to simple, innocent, and rational gratifications; serene, cheerful, and candid; free from the vanity of authorship; and far more desirous to acquire and communicate knowledge, than to obtain a brilliant reputation. Indeed, Mr. Stewart's acknowledged superiority, may well excuse him from feeling much anxiety respecting his fame. Yet it is among the first praises that can be bestowed upon a writer, that he is uniformly more occupied with his subject than with himself. To this Mr. Stewart is unquestionably entitled. He is entitled also to a still higher eulogy; that, amid all the varied topics and multiplied opinions which he has touched, he evinces an unfailing anxiety to

discover and establish whatever is true and valuable, without ever indulging his fancy in starting ingenious theories, or wasting his powers upon shewy and unprofitable speculations. It is this simplicity of purpose which, beyond all other qualities, entitles him, in our estimation, to the character of a great writer; it is this (to use his own language) which properly belongs to and is alone consistent with "that unclouded reason, that unperverted sensibility, and that unconquerable candour which mark a comprehensive, an upright, and an elevated mind."

## THEOLOGICAL TRACTS.

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### ON THE ATONEMENT.

1803.

“ For He hath made Him to be Sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him.” *2 Epist. to the Corinthians, c. 5. v. 21.*

AMONG the various proofs of Divine Benevolence, it is worthy of observation, that, however difficult may be the remoter branches of Science, all the knowledge which is of general importance is also of easy acquisition. In no subject is this truth more apparent, than in that, which is of all others the most interesting, Christianity ; the great doctrines of which, with the moral precepts thereto annexed, are not only easy to be believed, because clearly evidenced, but easy also to be comprehended, as far as the comprehension of them is necessary.

In the passage before us, the Apostle has set forth with great precision the important doctrine of the Atonement ; which, though unintelligible in its highest mysteries even to the first of created beings,

is nevertheless, (considered as a matter of fact,) level to the meanest capacities. As a fact, however, revealed from Heaven to Man, it is by far the most interesting with which humanity hath yet become acquainted ; because it is the corner stone of that religion which must guide our youth and cheer our age ! in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and health, in riches and poverty, must be our parent and friend, to lead us through the dangers of this life, and land us at last in safety on a happier shore. To the fuller explication, therefore, of this doctrine, as involving within itself the great outline of Christianity, I shall dedicate the following discourse.

Men require more generally to be reminded of the consequences of those truths which they acknowledge, than to be instructed in those of which they are ignorant ; and as few are unacquainted with the great points of the following summary, they will do well to remember, that if, without examining, they refuse to believe them, or, if believing, they neglect their correspondent duties, they rest not on the footing of Heathen nations, but must render an account of those advantages, which, if they refuse them as blessings, will become their heaviest condemnation.

“ In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.” This was the commencement of the *natural* government of God over the present world, for the regulation of which he established certain laws, as in the revolutions of the seasons, the properties of all bodies, the nature of the ele-

ments, and such other various qualities as we see to belong to the external world. “And he saw that every thing he had made was very good ;” by which we understand, not that it was the best possible, for this may be either true or false, but that it was perfect, that is, a work excellent in its kind, and worthy of its great Creator. Of the nature of this excellence we can only form a conception by analogy: many things still appear to us faultless, and we may thence infer, that the whole creation once was such as many of its parts still seem to be. But the design of our great Maker was not confined to the conduct of this his natural government, which was but preparatory to a higher and more lasting establishment. When the field of his future probation was now fully prepared, Man, its illustrious Master, was ushered into it by the hand of the same Omnipotence, and invested with a lawful authority over his habitation. As was the scene of Action, such also was the Agent, perfect in his kind according to the perfection of humanity; exactly fitted for the situation which he was destined to fill, a situation of high pre-eminence, since he was formed in the express image of his Maker. Here then, commences the *moral* Government of God, which, as far as our researches can penetrate, appears to be closely interwoven with his natural Government, both verging to the same end, and consolidated in the same system.

Man was by nature virtuous, and therefore by nature happy. Had he continued to perform those



duties which his Creator had enjoined, the principle of rectitude would have daily strengthened, and his perfection increased; but his virtue was free, and therefore capable of a fall, (capable, it must be observed, without any degree of proneness,) and on the preservation of that virtue his happiness was dependent. The issue we too well know; our first Parent, by the actual commission of sin, incurred the penalty annexed to it, and entailed the consequences of it on himself and his posterity.

Henceforth a new Era commenced; by this voluntary infraction of the laws of his Creator, the whole moral constitution of things was deranged; Man became subject to death as a punishment, and to all other human infirmities as the direct consequences of his conduct; the balance of his nature, in which his perfection consisted, was now overthrown; his Body was assailed by disease; and his Soul corrupted by pollution. To his Children he transmitted this depraved constitution, and as they, in their turn, increased the disorder by voluntary and additional guilt, the case must, humanly speaking, have been desperate, and we and all should for ever have advanced in progressive rapidity down the gulph of guilt and misery. This situation of the human race is indeed too melancholy to be contemplated without horror, yet, even in the depth of desperation must have been confessed to be just. What, then, should be our feelings of gratitude and admiration, when we learn, that in order to rescue us from the misery which we had embraced, to rec-

tify that *we* had deranged, a dispensation was appointed in the councils of Almighty Wisdom, actuated and guaranteed by the pity of infinite benevolence; a dispensation operating to our eternal benefit, not through our own sufferings, but through the perfect righteousness and atoning death of the Son of God himself; by which man should be again reinstated in the divine favour, and rendered capable of attaining that excellence and happiness which seemed to be for ever annihilated. This holy dispensation the same gracious God was pleased to reveal to our first parents, before they were driven from the mansions of peace into that troublous world in which their posterity have so long wandered. Thus did Christianity in its earliest hours display the same character which it hath ever after maintained, to heal the broken hearted and ease the afflicted in spirit. The unhappy authors of their children's calamities might, perhaps, have sunk under the sense of present evil, and the dread of future vengeance; but in the moment when the clouds of horror seemed to thicken around them, when Heaven was aroused to indignation, and the earth cursed for their transgression; a ray of consolation beamed on them from above, and the lamp of hope was illumed to point the way to pardon and to peace.

At the moment of the Fall of Man, and the subsequent Revelation of God, the date of Christianity commences. We are told, indeed, that the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of

the world ; and this is undoubtedly true, though in a sense to us mysterious. The Omniscience of God well knew, that the servant whom He was about to create would transgress the laws he should impose ; and, to meet the consequences of that transgression, the great Sacrifice of expiation was predetermined : but to man this gracious counsel was unknown ; after the FALL only was the revelation made, then its benefits were needed, and thence its obligations commenced. The substance of that revelation is contained in the words of my text, namely, that Christ, the Son of God, the second person in the blessed Trinity, “ should be made sin for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.” This is the high and awful truth on which the doctrine of the Atonement is founded ; this is the hinge on which the whole of Christianity centers : the collateral circumstances which preceded or accompanied this great dispensation, are, indeed, of high import, both from the matchless grandeur of the event which they introduce, and because, (independently considered,) they have, in various ways, furnished in the hands of Providence, the means of trial to our obedience, and of evidence to confirm our faith ; but, when compared with the perfect obedience, the sufferings, and the resurrection of the Son of God, they are lost, as the dawning of the twilight fades before the sun in the blaze of his meridian splendour. As, however, all these circumstances are necessary to be known and believed, I shall pre-

sent you with a summary of those steps which it pleased the Almighty to pursue in the accomplishment of the great work of redemption.

The promise, indeed, was made, but its accomplishment was postponed: postponed, (let it be remembered,) only in the performance of the event foretold, not in its operation; for of all the Sons of Adam, none hath ever yet been born, to whom the merits of a crucified Redeemer must not have reached, to render even his best actions acceptable. Why the actual advent of our Saviour in the flesh was thus long postponed, it is perhaps presumptuous to inquire; God may surely be allowed to direct that mystery, of the benefits of which we are unmerited partakers; which He only could have invented, and which He only can comprehend; yet sufficient reasons are not wanting, even on this dark subject, by which unauthorized curiosity may be silenced. Had the event promised been immediately fulfilled, and the life and death of our Saviour been coeval with the sin of Adam, the whole world, humanly speaking, must at the present hour have been plunged in the darkest gloom of Heathen idolatry. The direct and proper evidences of Christianity are, Prophecies and Miracles; but the first of these must have been lost for want of an object; the second for want of attestation. This is sufficient to shew the difficulties attendant on the advent of the Messiah at that period; and thus much being granted, it is but presumptuous folly to ask why the period assigned should rather be



4000 years after the creation, than any other era? Why was Cæsar born? or, Why was Babylon erected? We are forward enough to inquire wherefore it pleased God to accomplish the work of redemption at such times and in such a manner. Let not curiosity be limited; let us penetrate rather to the depths of speculation, and inquire first, wherefore it pleased God to redeem us at all? When this first question shall have been satisfactorily resolved, it will then be time to proceed in our investigation of the second.

But the accomplishment of the promised event, though delayed, was not therefore forgotten; from the moment of the Fall to the birth of our Saviour, the Holy Scriptures present us with a chain of historical facts, in which we behold the hand of Omnipotence still directing the same system; and by continual interference, by laws, by types, by prophecies, by punishments, preparing the field, on which the great scene of Redemption was ultimately to be acted. By the institution of sacrifice immediately after the fall, a holy memorial was appointed, typical of the great Offering one day to be made, and operating by reference to that, for the atonement of Sin. The Patriarchs no doubt preserved through their generations the memory of that promise which had been made to their progenitor, and indeed the life of man was at that period of so long duration, that though it might be neglected, it could scarcely have been forgotten. Practically forgotten however it was, amid the lusts and vio-



lence of that impious race, whose impieties God was pleased to suffer for a while, till the days of their probation were consummated, and the Flood came and swept them all away. Such was the issue of their crimes, such may be the punishment of ours. The same God, who at the fall of Adam had given his only Son to die for the sins of many; sent forth also the ministers of his vengeance to destroy a guilty world; holding forth a fearful example to their posterity, that “the seed of evil doers shall never be renowned:” for justice is the habitation of our God for ever.

But “though the grass wither, and the flower fade, the word of the Lord endureth.” From the ruins of Creation a remnant was yet preserved, in whose seed the oath of Jehovah should be fulfilled. The world was repeopled, and its Author was again forgotten: neither the remembrance of his past indignation, nor the hope of his promised mercy were sufficient to retain Man in subjection to his moral laws, or even under a just sense of his Religion. The divine interference was therefore again rendered necessary, and Abraham was called from the land of Chaldea to become the Father of a faithful people, among whom God should be made manifest in the flesh;

From this period the history of the Jews commences, and is carried on through many centuries in the books of the Old Testament until a short time after their return from Babylon. The whole of that history appears, even in its minuter inci-

dents, to have a relation to the coming of the Messiah, for the accomplishment of which end, and the preservation of the true Religion, they had been selected by God from among the nations. The offering up of Isaac, the captivity in Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the whole of the ritual law delivered by Jehovah from mount Sinai, were but shadows of the good things to come, and typical of the advent, administration, and sufferings of the Emmanuel that should be born. To him bare all the Prophets witness. The trials, the triumphs, the misfortunes of the Jewish nation, were but so many varied dispensations in which the finger of God was still visible, combining and directing the whole. A train of miraculous communications, increasing in clearness and precision as the hour of their accomplishment approached, was continued from the days of Samuel to Malachi, including a period of 750 years; at which time, being four centuries before the birth of our Saviour, the voice of Prophecy was silent, and an awful calm preceded the illustrious era, when the sound of the Lord should go out into all lands, and his word unto the ends of the world.

In the mean time, the other Nations of the Earth, after wandering long in ignorance and barbarism, had emerged into knowledge and civilization. They had awaked indeed from their dream of darkness, but they awaked only to wonder at themselves, to gaze with admiration at the surrounding objects, and inquire with hopeless curiosity, whence they

were, and wherefore they were created? A few faint rays of primeval truth yet shot a gleam into the bosom of solid night; and, guided by their aid, the most thoughtful could discern, that there was something beyond the gloom which surrounded them, something which they were unable to penetrate, but which they ventured to hope might be good; yet ignorant of the great truths on which the Redemption of man is grounded, they were lost in the mysteries of natural and moral Evil; they lived in vigorous inquiry, but they died in doubtful apprehension. Ages still flowed on, and knowledge more widely diffused itself: a large portion of the globe was now united in one empire, whose remotest provinces had been civilized by conquest and reposed in universal peace.

At length the period ordained by the Most High was accomplished, and the day arrived which "had been determined upon his people and holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins; and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." This great day had been foretold with so much accuracy, that we find the Jewish doctors, when consulted by Herod, expressly replied, that the Messiah should be born within 50 years; and, either from their communication with the Jews, or some cause with which we are unacquainted, a general expectation prevailed; even through the Heathen world, that some extraordinary person should come

forth from the East about that period. This opinion, was so prevalent, both with Jews and Gentiles, that Virgil, in his celebrated eclogue, has applied the same images to a Roman youth, which Isaiah, many centuries before, had used concerning the Saviour of mankind ; and Josephus, actuated by the same expectation, for some time considered Vespasian as the promised Messiah, principally it should seem because he was by birth a Jew. These facts are of great weight, because they dispose us to receive with readiness the proofs by which our Lord Jesus Christ was so signally distinguished from the various contemporary impostors. At present, however, it is our business rather to collect acknowledged truths, than to examine the evidences.

The advent of the King of Glory in this earthly mansion was accompanied with few marks of external greatness. The Choirs of Heaven indeed proclaimed his presence, and the wisdom of the earth bowed down before him ; but the Hallelujahs of the first were chaunted in the stillness of the night, to the ears of humble shepherds ; and the presents of the second were received under the covering of a stable. The God of Truth is not to be propitiated by worldly power or advantages, and therefore the same God, when clothed in humanity, sanctioned not by his example the splendour of an elevated station—but the God of all purity was born of a pure Virgin, in the town of Bethlehem, and of the lineage of David ; in a single moment fulfilling the three great features pointed out by pro-



phesy to identify his person. On the eighth day he was circumcised, fulfilling, for our sake, the ordinances of that law, whose ritual, as it was established only to precede his appearance, or prefigure his high Oblation, vanished of course in the accomplishment. The various circumstances, which signalized the birth of our Saviour, must have pointed him out to all pious minds as an object worthy of the highest attention, long before the assumption of his office as the Messenger of good tidings to Sion. To the majority of the Jews, however, his character was unknown till near 30 years after.

At length, endued with power from on high, and invested with full authority by the Spirit of God descending upon him after his Baptism, and victorious over the temptations of the evil one, by whose snares the first Adam had fallen, and whom it was therefore necessary that the second Adam should overcome, he publicly took upon himself the administration of his high office; and proclaimed to all the land of Judea, that the Kingdom of Heaven was come: by miracles and prophecies, by doctrine and example, by disputes with his enemies and lessons to his followers, confirming the truth of his revelation: until the hour arrived, when He, our great High Priest, should "enter in once into the Holy place, by his own Blood to obtain an eternal Redemption for us."

On the evening of the day which preceded his death, and which, according to the Jewish computation, formed part of the day of preparation, he



kept the Passover with his disciples ; and instituted the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ; then he retired with them to the garden of Gethsemane, where he endured all the horrors which the accumulated guilt of Man, and the desperate malice of Devils could heap upon him ; horrors so fearful, that though his Divine nature indeed supported them, his humanity seemed almost to sink beneath the weight. From this conflict he was hurried off by the bands of the apostate Judas to the judgment hall of Caiaphas ; and after being rudely dragged from thence to Pilate, and from Pilate to Herod, and after enduring in silence the mock justice and insolent blasphemy both of a Jewish and Roman tribunal, he was condemned to die by the judgment of Pontius Pilate, who in the moment of condemnation confessed his innocence. Then did they spit upon him, and buffet him ; till wearied with their own malice, they led him to crucifixion, on the same spot where Isaac had been offered to death by his father Abraham. " They gave him gall to eat, and when he was thirsty, they gave him vinegar to drink ; " " they pierced his hands and his feet ; " the iron entered into his soul. " They parted his garments among them, and for his vesture did they cast lots. " Thus did the darkest vengeance of Men and Devils conspire only to fulfil the prophecies and work the work of the Lord. And thus did He, before whom the Heaven of Heavens tremble, become accursed for us : " He was wounded for our transgressions, He was

bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by his stripes we are healed."

If in the hour of prosperity our hearts should be lifted up, or in the day of adversity depressed; if we should murmur that our good deeds are treated with contempt, and our benevolence returned with ingratitude, let us fix our eyes on the Cross of Christ, and tremble, and repent. There was the King of Glory levelled to the vilest of malefactors; how then shall Pride exalt herself! From the Cross was Jesus exalted to the right hand of Power; surely then, there is hope in the depth of affliction. The victim of Jewish persecution broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax: let him who can claim the like exemptions complain of the contumely of mankind; and, above all, let those who murmur at ingratitude remember, that they for whom the Lord bled repay him with blasphemy and insult.

When Jesus had now hung upon the Cross many hours, and Heaven and Earth in their convulsions had confessed their Maker; when the veil of the Temple had been rent asunder, and the separation of Jew and Gentile for ever annihilated; when every tittle of prophecy had been fulfilled, and the redemption of man completed; then was the awful sacrifice consummated, and "he bowed the head and gave up the ghost."

On the third day he rose triumphant from the grave, victorious over sin and death, and arrayed

with immortal glory. He rose, that we might rise also; to testify to an unbelieving generation, that he was indeed that Holy one, of whom David had said in the Spirit that he should not see corruption; and, above all, to confirm this momentous truth, that after our sojourn here on Earth, a future life yet remains for us, and that eternity, which is by all either feared or wished, shall by all either be suffered or enjoyed,

For forty days after his resurrection, Jesus shewed himself openly, not indeed to the Jews who had crucified him, but to witnesses chosen before of God, and sufficient both in number and character to authenticate the fact. On the fortieth day, he was received up into Heaven, having first solemnly blessed His Apostles, and commanded them to publish these truths to all nations. On them did the Holy Ghost soon after descend, to sanctify and strengthen them for their labours; and they, cheerfully accepting the task, went forth into the vineyard of Christ, "proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." Nor was their preaching vain. The words of the prophet were fulfilled, "Bel did indeed bow down, and Nebo stooped." "The Gentiles came to the light of their God, and Kings to the brightness of his rising, for the idols of the Heathens were confounded:" "instead of the thorn came up the fir tree, and instead of the brier came up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Thus have I given you a summary account of the great mystery of Redemption: to the serious contemplation of these facts, and their important consequences, I shall dismiss you after adding a few words of practical inference.

“ My Brethren,” says the beloved Apostle, “ if Christ so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” It is the great reproach, not indeed of Christianity, but of Christians, that, in defiance of the character and commands of its Founder, amity and general condescension have yet made but little progress among mankind. Difference of age, abilities, and education, ever have, and ever will produce disparity of opinion in all subjects of human cognizance; as well may we hope that every seed shall produce a tree of equal vigour, as that all men shall judge alike in all matters: yet, instead of applying that gentleness, which the consciousness of our own imperfections might recommend, to rectify the errors of our fellow creatures, or heal the wounds they have occasioned; we aggravate the first by our prejudices, and irritate the latter by our ill-judged violence. What! are we not all Brethren? are we not all bought with a price? are we not all depraved? This at least is evident, that they most need Charity for themselves, who are least willing to bestow it on others. [The conclusion is unhappily lost.]

## ON THE ETERNITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENTS.

1804:

Esse aliquos Manes, et Subterranea Regna—  
Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum ære lavantur :  
Sed tu vera puta.—*Juv.* 2 S.—150.

No circumstance has so much disturbed the philosophy of the ancients, and the impatience of the moderns, as the existence of natural and moral evil. To the former it was unaccountable on any reasonable principles, and embarrassed their fairest theories; and though it has been rendered less mysterious to the latter by the revelations of God, yet to all it is involved in darkness, and is peculiarly perplexing to those who value too highly their own ideas of the Divinity. By the Christian Gospel the certainty of future rewards and punishments is clearly established; and as the eternal duration of the latter involves in it the excess of evil in both its kinds, this doctrine has met with a proportionate difficulty in its reception. That an all-merciful God should create an human being, well knowing at his birth that he will purchase for himself endless misery, has appeared so repugnant to the received notions of Divine Goodness, that many have presumed to doubt, and some boldly to deny the truth of so



alarming a proposition ; and as few difficulties can resist a favourite theory, it has been discovered that the Holy Scriptures contain no conclusive evidence of this doctrine. But as “ the terrors of the Lord ” are among the great instruments of salvation, we should needs be cautious how we diminish their efficacy ; and I fear it may be shewn, that the infinite duration of future torments is rather rendered probable than contradicted by our limited knowledge of divine dispensations, and (which is more conclusive) that the testimony of Revelation is very direct and convincing.

The idea generally entertained of the goodness of God, to which this doctrine is supposed so repugnant, has been “ an unlimited disposition to promote the happiness of all his creatures.” With this extensive attribute, thus unqualified, not only the eternity of future punishments, but the smallest degree of existing evil, is to our limited understandings irreconcilable ; but then they are each equally so : infinite benevolence cannot admit of “ majus or minus,” it is one and immutable. The most transient head-ach, and the damnation of all mankind, are in this view involved in the same mystery. Actual evil does exist, and cannot be inconsistent with the moral perfection of God : it is evident, therefore, either that we are mistaken in supposing such an attribute inherent in the Almighty, or, that being utterly in the dark upon the subject, we can neither affirm or deny any thing concerning it. To maintain then that such must be the nature of Divine Benevolence, and thence infer the impossibility

of infinite vengeance, is to talk ignorantly and at random.

But, perhaps, on a more thoughtful consideration of the subject, we may suspect that we are a little too hasty in thus investing our Creator with those attributes\* which we think fit to assign him; and may see that this idea of perfect love, is but the

\* I have often been struck with our presumption in defining the attributes of the Deity; a subject with which, like most of which we are ignorant, we make rather too free. The usual ideas entertained of our Maker amount to little more than this; we take all those qualities which we find in ourselves contributing, as we think, to our perfection, and adding infinity to them, fancy we have an adequate idea of the "Ens Entium." Whereas it is not clear that there is the least similitude between the nature of the creature and his Creator: and it is morally certain, that an infinite variety of perfections must dwell in Him, of which no seeds are yet sown in us. The more direct path appears to be the same which we adopt in common life: to draw our inferences concerning his nature and character from the manifestations of it in the affairs of this world, and in express revelation, remembering only the humility with which we should enter on a subject so awful and incomprehensible. Were the mysteries of the Eleusinian Ceres enveloped in darkness, and shall JEHOVAH be the subject of our petulant speculations?

Methinks the contradictions into which we so often fall, might teach us more humility: we can only consider the attributes of our Maker singly, and in exalting one, we perpetually degrade another; yet it is curious, that the attribute which we most frequently disallow, is that which is most fully evidenced—his Omnipotence, Pope says,

Of systems possible, if 'tis confest,

That Wisdom infinite *must* form the best—

laying down this truth as the foundation of his system. Cannot God then be at once All-wise and Almighty? Yet if this postu-

fiction of our fancy, which imagines that a virtuous disposition, amiable in human beings, would suit also the perfection of their Maker. In considering the moral attributes of God, the best guides we can possess are the dispensations of his natural and moral government, which, as far as our weak intellects can comprehend them, afford direct evidences of his character. From an examination of these, it should seem, that we much mistake the nature of Divine Benevolence, which appears to be identified with justice, and to consist, not in an infinite affection towards all his works, but in an infinite affection only towards the virtuous part of them; and to be balanced at the same time by a detestation equally infinite, of that part which is vicious.

The attributes of the Almighty being *thus* considered, punishment is a consequence of sin, as necessary, and resulting as directly from his moral nature, as the rewards of virtue: and the eternal torments of the wicked, their crimes being supposed to be proportionate, would follow as a natural emanation from the same system. If such then be the establishment of God's moral government, endless late be granted, his powers are limited indeed; for then it is impossible for him to create above one system, supreme excellence being one. Even Lord Bacon, in his celebrated confession of faith, supposes it to have been impossible for God to have created any thing which would have seemed good in his eyes, unless washed by the blood of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Cannot God then be at once All-pure and Almighty? Like flatterers ignorant of their trade, we debase where we mean to exalt.

misery is of course possible; and those who deny it can deny it only *sub modo*, by asserting that no crimes committed on earth can deserve such a retribution. This would be daring, if not impious; and perhaps it is sufficient to reply, that if sin be in itself so odious as to admit of no atonement but the sufferings of God himself, they can have little room to hope for mercy, who aggravate crimes inexpiable without such a miracle, by the defiance of those sufferings which might have purchased their safety. It is of little import whether we can or cannot reconcile these awful dispensations with our notions of the Creator; they speak to us with a voice sufficiently intelligent, and declare that such is the conduct of the Almighty, whether we may please to approve of it or not.

Thus much is sufficient to prove that the doctrines of our Church, on this head, contain in them nothing *contradictory* to the Attributes of Providence, as evident in his conduct before us, and this, *ad homines*, is enough; for then they stand on the evidence of the Holy Scriptures unaffected by any antecedent improbability. But the truth is, that analogy goes further than these negative proofs, and all its additional testimony will be found to incline to the same side. It is observable, that in the government of this world, punishments are much more generally distributed than rewards. Misery of all kinds is frequent and public, while happiness is silent and invisible: an awful lesson, well calculated to teach us that our God is a God of judgment;



and to warn us, lest relying too much on the infinite mercies he has vouchsafed us, we should forget the more tremendous parts of his administration. Are we disposed to think leniently of our sins, and believe it incredible that the threatened vengeance should be thus unlimited? Let us recollect, that those who, to our dim vision, seem purified from sin and elevated almost to angelic excellence, have certainly in some, and perhaps in all ages, been the objects of the severest visitations. If then it be so, that failings, to us invisible, bring with them such fearful consequences, how shall we calculate the sum of evil to be poured forth on his head, whose life has been devoted to iniquity, unqualified by any virtue? Imagination shrinks from such a consideration, and can repose only in humble resignation on the merits of a merciful Redeemer.

Beyond, however, these proofs of the probable severity of punishments, the course of events in this world affords yet one instance directly analogous to the doctrine in dispute; and the conduct of Providence, in the one case, affords a strong presumption that the same will be adopted in the other. Imprudence in temporal concerns appears to bear the same relation to the present state, as moral misconduct may be supposed to bear to a future one. Now, it is observable, that though imprudent conduct, to a certain point, may be wholly or partially repaired, yet, when that point is past, it is even here *irretrievable*; no repentance can atone, no labours can avert the consequences; but the ills naturally



attendant on such actions come on irresistibly upon us, *till a premature death finally closes the scene\**: The man who by early intemperance wastes his health, his fortune, and his character, has a season of probation allowed him, in which reformation is practicable; but the day soon comes when even reformation is vain; when their “fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind.”

If then there be any force in analogical reasoning, and if this analogy be correct, a strong presumption is here afforded, from the circumstances which actually pass before our eyes, of the truth of that doctrine, which our Church is content to rest only on the words of the New Testament; so little foundation is there for the assertion that it is a priori improbable.

I have one more observation to offer in confirmation of this truth, before we proceed to the evidences of revelation. The constitution of our nature is such that it is scarcely possible for us to continue stationary. Habits, whether good or evil, are daily strengthening; and in proportion as we press on in virtue or vice, the difficulty of receding is increased; and it is easy to conceive these habits so advanced by constant exertion, as to leave nothing more than an abstract possibility of any future alteration. Such is the state of the case even here; but we know that with this life the hour of probation will be ended. If, therefore, we may venture to reason at all concerning the mysteries of a future world, it should

\* This argument from the analogy of death may be found in Bishop Butler.

seem almost *naturally* impossible to banish the eternity of punishments: for God's moral government being supposed the same, punishments must be attendant upon crimes; and those who, at the time of their dissolution, had reached any considerable height of depravity, *must*, according to the present constitution of things, daily sink deeper in vice, by the daily corroboration of their vicious habits; and thus crimes and their attendant punishments *must* continue in a perpetually accelerating and eternal progression.

As a refuge from these fearful auguries, we can look only to the mercies of God and the merits of our Saviour; but even these, though the source of all comfort, are pregnant also with awful considerations, since the first, we know are conditional, and the latter attest the consequence of unrepented sins. Whether these arguments would in themselves be sufficient to prove the truth of the doctrine I maintain, is not very material to determine; but I hope they will be thought so far to remove all the usual objections, as to allow the mind to look for its confirmation in Holy Writ, without any disposition to cavil at it when discovered.

The observations which I have already offered, would have been of less importance, had the doctrine now under examination met with no opposition. To me the words of Revelation are fully adequate to its establishment; but the history of heresy, in every age, may assure us, that no language, however direct, would be thought convincing by those whose

minds are already wedded to opinions, which they are sure the Bible cannot contradict.

Who boldly take the high priori road,  
And reason downward—till they doubt of God.

Such, I apprehend, is the history of Dr. Clarke's Arianism. He had demonstrated the unity of God metaphysically, and to this proof Article of Faith all difficulties, and (as he esteemed them) contradictions, were obliged to give way. In the same manner many learned Divines have proceeded in rejecting the eternity of future torments;—having first convinced themselves that such an opinion would be contradictory to the known attributes of God, they pass a hasty eye over passages which, on their principles, seem hard to be comprehended: using in this case their reason, much as the Quakers do their spirit, which must be infallible, though the Scriptures may be misinterpreted. Against such antagonists it seems useless to dwell merely on particular texts, because, admitting their premises, perhaps no texts would be thought conclusive; I have therefore endeavoured to shew that those premises are ungrounded, and that nothing can be adduced to prove this doctrine contradictory to the attributes of God, as understood from his ordinary dispensation towards us, but rather that every thing around us strongly tends to confirm it. I now proceed to make a few observations on the nature of the testimony by which it is supported in the New

Testament, as well as the construction by which that testimony is evaded.

The words principally under dispute in this controversy are those by which eternity is usually designated in the Bible: “*εις τους αιωνας*,” sometimes written with the fuller addition of “*των αιωνων*.” These words, it is said, may be best understood either as describing a period of *indefinite duration*, not absolutely eternal, but to which no limit is assigned; or as an expression directly borrowed from the Jews, and meant only to extend to the expiration of those æons into which they divided the several administrations of Providence. I am incapable of entering very critically into this matter, but I think I see enough to convince me that neither of these constructions is tenable. In answer to the latter it may be said, that the Jews never thought of more than two ages; the present, which included the advent of the Messiah; and the future, which they believed to be eternal—each of these they styled “*αιων*,” but when referring to the last always considered it as infinite.—Thus John vi. 51. “*εις τον αιωνα*;” is rendered by our translators “for ever;” and I suppose correctly, for we read that till the time of Ezra, their benedictions (like ours) concluded with the phrase *עליוול* strictly rendered “*εις τον αιωνα*;” when the Sadducees becoming numerous and disputing the meaning of this expression, they adopted that form which we render “*εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων*,” as more full and conclusive.



It seems however evident, that whatever might be the origin of these words, they soon became engrafted in the language as a common form of speech, and in fact, considered in either light, the constructions contended for are both open to the following objections. For 1st, Had the Greeks no form of speech by which to express eternity? Was their language, the richest ever known, destitute of a symbol appropriated to that idea which we find inseparable from our minds? How then shall we prove the eternity of future happiness? or must this be restricted within the same limits in order to make a fair compromise? a sort of diplomatic arrangement by which the balance is equitably adjusted between our Maker and ourselves? But 2dly. These unhappy words are placed also in situations where they become much more perplexing: for instance, St. Paul speaking of our Saviour says “Θεος ευλογητος εις τες αιωνας.” Rom. ix. 5.—so 1 Tim. 1. 17. “τω βασιλει των αιωνων (which our translators have ventured to render “Eternal”) Θεω τιμη, και δοξα εις τες αιωνας των αιωνων.” Can these expressions possibly be limited? can the existence of God be finite, or the glory we pay him not concurrent with it? I confess I am unable to see how the difficulty is to be met; yet one of the most direct texts on the present subject is conceived in the same words, where St John, Rev. xx. 10. speaking of the Devil, the Beast, and the false prophet, says “και βασανισθησονται ημερας και νυκτος εις τες αιωνας των αιωνων.” If to all this we add, that αιων



is generally agreed to be compounded of *αιει ων*\* to express perpetuity, I think we shall see strong ground to adopt the construction, for which I am an unlearned advocate.—But, if it were not thought too daring a concession, I could almost be willing to yield these arguments to our opponents, and rest the question on grounds to which similar objections cannot apply—*αιων* it is allowed has several senses, and though I have no doubts as to the phrase under discussion, this circumstance affords some colour to those who maintain the contrary opinion; but though the substantive be thought questionable, I suppose there is not a shade of reason for extending the same objections to its adjective; *αιωνιος* I apprehend *always* means eternal; thus St. John speaking of our Saviour, 1 Epistle ii. calls him “*αιωνιον ζωνη*” where it can mean nothing else; yet we read also of “*τωρ αιωνιον*” and “*ολευθρος αιωνιος*” Many more texts might be cited, but I believe I may say that there is not one passage in the New Testament in which there is any ground for rendering it otherwise. But the evidence for this doctrine is not yet exhausted; it presents itself in various shapes, and rests not on the critical accuracy of expressions. The punishment which the wicked shall hereafter suffer, is continually spoken of under the title of Death, the most gloomy of all characters, which seems to point

\* So Hesiod “*μακαρων γενος αιει ευδων.*” From *αιων ævum* is also clearly derived. See Scapula on these words and a quotation given by him from Philo a Jew.

it out as dark and final,—a state from which there is no return, cut off from light, and hope, and consolation. John the Baptist closes his figurative account of our Saviour's ministration, by declaring, that he shall burn the chaff with "*fire unquenchable*:" this requires no comment; it is direct, and, I think, conclusive. Or if confirmation be needed, our Blessed Lord himself compares the wicked to the tares which the lord commanded his servants to gather together at the harvest, and burn them in heaps, a direct emblem of utter destruction: and elsewhere describes the place of torments, by declaring that there "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Of the sinner against the Holy Ghost he expressly asserts, that he shall not be pardoned "either in this world or the world to come;" and, as if he would have answered the doubts of those whose opinions are in question, he affirms of Judas, that "it had been good for him had he never been born." This last declaration indeed seems to me to render their case hopeless; for all their bold attempts to establish forced constructions, are grounded on a conviction, that it shall be well with all at the last: and that every passage *must* be misunderstood, which would falsify the opinion, that God's infinite benevolence shall finally produce good out of evil; that every paradox shall be reconciled, and universal happiness crown the consummation of all things. Alas! this single speech of our Saviour for ever annihilates this fair

theory; it no longer trembles before the blast, but is stretched in ruins upon the dust.

Such among many others are the passages on which our Church has established this disputed doctrine, and to me I must confess they are satisfactory: yet I am well aware that by many it is thought not only absurd, but cruel and intolerant—the child of priestcraft and terror of ignorance. Would to God I could esteem it such. The horrors of endless punishment have no charms to seduce the imagination, and the evidences of their truth must command our understandings, not win our favour. But the same observation is equally applicable to the tempests by which this world is agitated, of which the proofs are irresistible, and it is infinitely important that what is clearly established by the word of God, should not be rejected by the pride of man.

If my memory is correct, the first Christian Father of eminence who called in question the eternity of future torments, was the celebrated Origen; a man who seems to have been harshly treated both by his contemporaries and successors. His opinions on this subject (as on some others), he never patronized in public, but communicated them only in the confidence of private correspondence;—perhaps rather hazarding them as probable, than maintaining them as certain; and it should be recorded to his honour, that what he thus privately supported, he publicly recanted before his death. But his disciples

have greatly increased both in number and confidence, and the gloomy picture afforded us by our spiritual mother, is rejected alike by the proud subtilty of the philosopher, and the fastidious elegance of the Poet. Among the notes to a \* work of just celebrity, I remember formerly to have met with a Sonnet ending thus :

“ And realize the hell which Priests and Beldams feign.”

I know not how such an interpreter of the Scriptures could maintain the truth of a single doctrine therein contained. I am sure I can quote the authority of another poet, before whose splendid orb his little ray is swallowed up in darkness.

————— for ever sunk  
 Under yon boiling ocean wrapt in chains,  
 There to converse with everlasting groans,  
 Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved,  
 Ages of hopeless end.

Milton, with all his errors, presumed not to flatter his imagination at the expense of his judgment, and those who can reach neither his learning nor sublimity might at least copy his humility. But why, it is said, all this disturbance about a trifling deviation, where no moral evil can ensue!—The terrors of hell are sufficient whether they be infinite or not.—I answer: why any deviation at all where the

\* The Pleasures of Memory.

matter is allowed to be unimportant? But is it indeed unimportant? Is it nothing to spread a veil over the effulgence of truth? Is it nothing to resist the evidence of Holy Writ? Is it nothing to retrench God's awful declarations of vengeance; by expunging a large part of the damnatory clauses? Is it nothing to desecrate our holy Church, by holding up her doctrines to contempt?—Nor can I allow that no moral evil will ensue: to the majority of mankind dread of pain is a more powerful motive than anticipation of happiness, and the rather as our conception of the former is the most perfect. To say that this is a slavish motive, is not true, and would matter little if it were—Suffice it for us, that it is such a motive as God himself has sanctioned;—it would not have been supplied had it not been meant to operate. But by robbing future punishment of its Eternity, we deprive it of half its terrors, and leave it almost to the choice of the individual whether he will receive a given quantum of present good, for a proportionate ratio of future evil;—as if obedience were a matter of prudence only, and might be waived by those who will waive also its advantages. Judging only by my own feelings, I must consider the abridgment of this doctrine as highly dangerous to the general virtue of mankind. Even when clothed in all its terrors, the present glitter of pleasure or ambition often can obscure it; and we have little reason to think its effects too powerful, either in restricting our vicious or animat-



ing our virtuous habits. Its effects must be greatly diminished by adopting the limitations proposed. If misery be considered as finite, hope cannot be extinguished ; and while hope remains to cheer us, pain cannot be intolerable : but the mind shudders at the view of that vengeance which no ages shall exhaust, as the eye of the traveller amid the wilds of Arabia shrinks from the prospect of unlimited desolation.

ON THE SUPPOSED CONNECTION BETWEEN  
RELIGION AND MELANCHOLY.

1806.

I AM not about to assign any single cause to explain the phenomenon in question. Philosophy in all her branches has suffered too much already from our love of generalizing, which is in fact the love of system. This method, of reducing every appearance in the natural and moral world under a few general rules, is very agreeable to our indolence, but not quite as safe as it is pleasant. In the present case at least, I am satisfied that no single reason would be found satisfactory; though I hope it will appear upon inquiry, that most cases of religious melancholy may be sufficiently accounted for; that they grow naturally out of the established order of things, and reflect not the slightest discredit on Christianity.

Before I enter on this inquiry, I must make a few preliminary remarks

1. Religious persons, (I mean, they who are indeed the children of God, who walk by faith and not by sight,) are by no means universally disposed to be melancholy. If a subject so indefinite could admit of computation, I doubt not but a large ma-

majority of real Christians would be found to be truly happy ; not only as compared with worldly men in similar circumstances, but beyond all worldly men in any circumstances. I know those whose very aspect is enough to tempt one to be religious ; whose bosoms seem cheered by unvaried sunshine, the regions of eternal spring, like the fabled mansions of the blest ;

Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old,  
Fortunate fields, and groves, and flowery vales ;  
Thrice happy isles !

But these are they who stand upon the very verge of heaven, and are arrived within prospect of the New Jerusalem. Such are rarely to be found among young Christians ; and religious gloom is most frequently visible in our younger brethren. “ Many persons,” it has been said, “ *especially young persons*, enjoy few, if any, of the consolations of religion.” I am inclined to think that the observation may be qualified still further. Religious melancholy will, I believe, principally be discovered in *young men*, and among them most frequently in young *converts*. The reason of this (if the fact be true) will appear in the course of our inquiry. I state it, however, only as theoretically probable. My own knowledge of particulars is too confined to warrant any experimental inference.

2. I am apt to think that we are deluded in estimating the happiness of others, by outward appearances ; just as we are in estimating their worth. If

a man laughs loud, and overflows with animal activity, and boisterous merriment, we cry, happy fellow! But without denying that such coarse ebullitions may indicate constitutional joyousness, surely this turbulent vivacity is not a *necessary* element or evidence of gladness. The bounding kitten may be happy, and is not the purring cat? Are the gambols of the dolphin upon the ocean more enviable, than the complacency of the steer ruminating beneath the shade of the British oak? Yet mankind in general seem to have no idea of composed felicity. It must be active and tumultuous; and this occasions their mistakes as to the happiness of Christians. They cannot value, for they can hardly comprehend, the placid enjoyments of religion. The pious aspirations, the holy joy, the heavenly peace, which are fountains of celestial gladness continually springing up in the bosom of the good man, produce no bustle, and therefore excite no observation. I doubt not but many of the happiest of mortals are to be found among those children of God who pass on-unnoticed in their pilgrimage, and are viewed by their worldly neighbours, sometimes with pity, and sometimes with contempt. It is natural, therefore, that men should underrate the happiness of Christians, from their imperfect knowledge of its real marks. They infer melancholy, wherever they see unobtrusive quiet and composure. But it is not so—

“The broadest mirth unfeeling folly wears,  
Less pleasing far than virtue’s very tears.”

If I can judge at all from my own experience, laughter is a very bad criterion of gladness. Nay we know that the most comical productions of Swift and Cowper were written while their authors laboured under an afflictive constitutional dejection. Philosophers take a distinction between the beautiful and the picturesque; and I believe it is a just one. The pleasure (they say) which we feel in stealing along a sunny vale, soothed by the concert of the woods and murmuring waters, is of a different kind from the delight enjoyed in coursing over an open champaign, keen in the chase, and braced by the wintry gales. The two kinds of happiness alluded to, admit, I believe, of the same distinction, and for myself, I must confess a decided partiality to the beautiful\*.

3. In attempting to account for the frequency of religious gloom, I shall not meddle with those cases in which melancholy evidently arises from an erroneous practice or unhappy opinions. These sufficiently explain themselves. If (as too commonly happens) men, who have strong religious impressions, will indulge themselves in some favourite, but vicious habits; or if they cherish their negligence in religion, from wilful blindness, because

\* See Pascal's Thoughts. That sublime writer considers all restlessness as the effect of our degenerate nature dissatisfied with itself, and complacent satisfaction as evidencing the remains of our original perfection. Indeed, it may be observed, that contentment is called true happiness. Now contentment implies repose; an easy and cheerful acquiescence in the present state of things.



they are afraid to contemplate the real terms of salvation; it is no wonder they are gloomy. They must be uneasy; they ought to be uneasy. To be happy in such a case is to be miserable. But their gloom obviously "is owing not to their religion, but to their deficiencies in religion. While they continue to be the servants of sin, they must expect the wages of sin\*." To such we can only say, "Turn ye unto the Lord with your whole hearts; for the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever; but "there is no peace," saith my God, "to the wicked."

So likewise if a man unhappily thinks some of the miserable penances of the Romish Church necessary to his acceptance, or is involved in that extreme darkness of predestinarian fantasy, which is full of "fearful shapes and sounds of woe:" so that he apprehends an irreversible decree of reprobation to have passed against him; it is very natural he should be dejected. Such cases fall not within our present inquiry, for they carry with them their own solution. They may move our compassion, but cannot excite our surprize. They imply not the slightest reproach to Christianity, because they are the known consequences of adequate causes. Those causes, indeed, may afford some triumph to the ir-

\* Mr. Gisborne. See the admirable discourse which closes his first volume of Sermons.

religious, but it is beside the question to shew its emptiness.

However, after all proper deductions, it must be owned there still remains much of real or apparent melancholy among religious persons unaccounted for. Christianity is a religion of Cheerfulness. How is it that so many of its worthiest professors seem to bear a living testimony against its excellence; that while they practise its precepts, they cannot enjoy its privileges? The causes I believe are various; to be found in the tempers of those who embrace Christianity; their peculiar situations; and the nature of the world around us. Perhaps after examining into these causes, their effects will appear less extraordinary.

In the first place, let us consider who are they who at all times are the most likely to accept the offers of covenanted grace. What said our blessed Lord? "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christianity offers rest to the weary, and consolation to the hopeless. Surely it is not wonderful, if some at least of the children of woe accept the proffered mercy. Yet such Christians, it is obvious, will be melancholy; for religion, though undoubtedly it corrects, does by no means destroy our feelings. The widow and orphan, the childless parent and distracted husband, will fly to their Saviour for refuge; and they shall find him to be a Saviour indeed: "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the

tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." But they still remained widowed and fatherless: the parent has lost the child of his expectation, and the husband the "delight of his eyes." It is meet they should mourn, though "not as without hope." Nay, I am not sure whether to common observers they will not appear more unhappy, as they become less so. When men are wretched without consolation, they are apt, (particularly before others,) to make a desperate effort to rid themselves of their misery, and dash into tumultuous gaiety, or vicious indulgence, to effect a momentary release from evils they are unable to endure. Such men are indeed horrible spectacles. Like a lion in the toils of the hunter, they chafe and roar, and struggle only to exhaust their strength, and entangle themselves more desperately. Yet for a while such efforts may give an appearance of vigour, and deceive those who see not the loathsome dregs which subside when the fermentation is over. Christianity subdues this unnatural violence, and softens the sufferer into patience. It not only teaches him that resistance against the dispensations of Heaven is unlawful, but makes him feel it as unwelcome and unnecessary. He who so lately bore his yoke with uneasiness or passion, and knew his sorrows only as wretchedness for the present, and despair for the future, learns to bow cheerfully under his burthen, can trace in his afflictions the hand of a benign Providence, and, entering in hope within the veil, takes up his cross with joy, and follows the foot-

steps of his Master. Yet it is possible, that, to worldly spectators, this placid submissiveness may pass only for increased wretchedness; and Religion is thus sometimes discredited by the very blessings she communicates.

Be this however as it may, it is evident at least that unhappiness will probably lead us to embrace Christianity in earnest. But alas, to careless and prejudiced observers, Christianity and unhappiness thus become associated, and a collateral effect is mistaken for the cause. Calista is still young and beautiful; her disposition was naturally gentle and sensible, and the tenderness of her parents cherished early in her bosom the habits of holiness. When Calista was about sixteen, she was seized with an alarming fever which long threatened her life. Under discipline so severe, she improved daily in every pious affection, and has grown to a height in grace rarely equalled by her sister saints. She is now four and twenty. The fever I have just mentioned, though it did not prove fatal, hung upon her for many months, and weakened a constitution which never was robust. Calista is at times dejected, for her spirits are not strong, and the world is full of trials. Her friends say, she is too religious; it makes her melancholy. She says, I am melancholy because my health is weak, and religion is my only consolation. Poor Calista! I am apt to think she is right, but nobody believes her.

But the unhappy are by no means the only class of mortals, to whom it is probable that Christianity



will seem welcome. There are pains of the understanding as well as of the heart. Men of grave and contemplative tempers cannot long remain insensible to the darkness which surrounds them. We find ourselves dropped (as it were) into a theatre of wonders: marvellously formed, and marvellously sustained; unknowing whence we came, or whither we are destined; ignorant with all our capacities for knowledge, and miserable with all our powers of enjoyment. The mind which sees these things must be base and sluggish indeed, if it feels no anxiety to escape from a prison where it is so "strait kept without iron bars;" and to ascertain the reality, or at least to take a closer view of the mighty vision which is sweeping by us. The philosopher, therefore, (I use the word in its proper sense) looks round for direction to his inquiries. Christianity boldly presents herself, offering a solution of every doubt, so far as knowledge is profitable, and promising present safety with future illumination. Surely it is not miraculous that a wise man should think such proposals worth examining; nor, if he examines, is it strange he should be convinced. The rest follows in order: "he becomes first regular, then devout." It may be expected then, that a contemplative man will be an earnest Christian; nor can it seem wonderful, if, being a Christian, he still continues to be contemplative. Gravity, however, with the gay and thoughtless, passes for gloom. They are guilty of two errors. They mistake seriousness for melancholy; and they impute that seriousness, so mis-



called, to religion, instead of constitution. Even good men of a different temper, who have never studied human nature, often adopt the same misconception. Sophron possesses a very profound understanding. Happily for him he was regularly educated, or his powerful mind might have been lost in dialects and prosody. Being left, however, to discover truth for himself, he became early accustomed to reflection, and few reflect seriously without being religious. He is so in an eminent degree. His spirits are easy and regular, for his heart rests in hope: he can review the past without remorse, and anticipate the future with humble but joyful assurance. Sophron's manners are rather distant, and to those who know but little of him seem ungracious: his habits of thoughtfulness too have given him the appearance of gravity and abstraction. Thus it happens that some who are slightly acquainted with him, or only hear of him by report, fancy he wants cheerfulness; and as he is known to be very religious, Christianity as usual bears the burthen.

There is yet a third class of men, of whom it may be said to be antecedently probable, that they will at some period of their youth become zealously attached to Christianity. These are they who possess by nature great quickness of sensibility, joined with ardent imaginations. Such men have strong and delicate perceptions of the sublime and beautiful. The grandeur of the rewards which revelation promises, and the awfulness of the punishments it de-

nounces, naturally arrest their attention. The holiness and lovely simplicity of the character of Jesus, his dignity, his tenderness, and his sufferings, have charms to awake their best affections. Such men too are early disgusted or satiated with the coarse pleasures of the world. Their fancy sketches almost intuitively an image of perfection, of which Christianity alone presents the perfect draught. Besides which they have generally very unequal spirits: the same heart which, during the hours of social festivity, overflows with gaiety, is weighed down in solitude by comfortless dejection. Their disappointments are greater than those of other men; for they over-calculate the value of every object they pursue, as well as their chances of obtaining it; and thus, whether they succeed or fail, they are still deceived. All these circumstances concur to invite them to become the children of God, to "cast their cares on him," forgetting and despising the baubles they have too long pursued. But the change which is wrought in them respects rather the direction, than the nature of their affections, Christianity indeed will gradually teach them to control their ardour, to regulate their emotions, and resist all excess of feeling, whether rapturous or mournful; and perhaps at last infuse into their bosoms that placid cheerfulness, which seems to be the kind and degree of happiness best suited to our feeble constitutions. But this must be the work of time. Till then, much of their ardour or their sanguineness will remain; they will be at one moment

elevated into rapture, and at another depressed with melancholy. Even good men of a more equable temperament, not comprehending the causes of their occasional dejection, may probably suspect that religion, which so evidently influences their hearts, affects also their cheerfulness: while their less serious acquaintance will undoubtedly lament (according to the mummery of worldly lamentation) that such noble spirits should be ruined by methodism. Eugenés is one of those beings I have described, who, from delicacy of organization, feels more quickly than the common race of mortals; and though he has been visited by no grievous afflictions, a variety of circumstances have hitherto made him better acquainted with sorrow than delight. Eugenés was early instructed in the best principles of Christianity, and the merciful visitations of Providence have gradually taught him their real value. He has made no great progress in religion, yet I believe he is sincere, and dreads sin more than suffering; but he has delicate health and very unequal spirits. It cannot be denied that religion is to him occasionally a source of pain as well as pleasure. His heart at times seems to overflow with gladness, but in other moments I have seen him dreadfully agitated. His friends perceive this, and express their fears of his being too religious. But in truth religion has no connexion with his complaint; it is only the field in which his natural temper displays itself. If Eugenés had fixed his affections on any other object, his spirits would have been liable to the same fluc-

tuation: we should still have witnessed in him the same returns of rapture and regret, of exultation and dejection.

I think it has appeared, that of the three descriptions of persons, who, in the common course of providence, are most likely to be earnestly religious, the first and the last will at the utmost only retain the same degree of melancholy as Christians, which they must have suffered as men; while the gloom imputed to the second class exists only in the ignorance or misconception of the spectators. At the same time it appears, that a certain quantity of real or apparent melancholy among Christians is far from being a just subject of surprize. On the contrary, if we consider the situation or tempers of those who are most likely to be affected with the offers of Gospel grace, the absence of what we so justly lament would be a much stranger phenomenon.

So much for the causes which account for dejection of spirits among the religious, *independent of religion*. These it will be observed apply to persons of all ages. They act, however, most powerfully in the young; for Christianity has such influence in softening every sorrow, that these "natural tears" are gradually wiped away, and sometimes even the furrows they had worn in our cheeks almost wholly disappear.

Let us now inquire, what there is peculiar to the situation of Christians, which may account for some

further proportion of those distressing anxieties, which yet remain unaccounted for.

It seems allowed that religious melancholy is principally found in young persons, and I have before stated my apprehension, that it prevails particularly among young *men*. My reasons for that opinion are these. Women possess by nature a larger share of animal vivacity than men. The same kind Providence which plants antidotes by the side of poisons, while it subjects the softer sex to so many sorrows arising from physical and moral causes, has furnished them with a proportionate buoyancy of spirits to sustain the weight of their afflictions. This prevents in a great degree their falling within two of the three descriptions of persons above noticed, and qualifies indeed the dejection to which they would be subject from any of the numberless sources of human woe; for constitution has a mighty influence either in aiding or repelling melancholy, even when the immediate cause is wholly external. Besides which, women are in general much more innocent than men; and of the distress which can in any sense be imputed to religion, I have no doubt a very large portion is occasioned by the remembrance of past or the dread of future crimes. This conviction induced me to state, that gloom is particularly visible in that class of young religionists whom I termed *converts*. I call those converts, by way of distinction, who, after a certain course of vicious indulgences, or habitual indiffer-



ence to the concerns of religion, learn to feel the perils to which they stand exposed, and the incalculable importance of those things they have neglected. It is natural, it is proper, that such men should be anxious, thoughtful, and at times even deeply afflicted; and in pointing out the very obvious causes of distress to Christians so situated, I believe I am accounting for a considerable part of the evil we lament, after deducting what arises from causes not at all peculiar to religious persons.

Some there are, who by the special grace of God, having been born of excellent parents, and trained up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," far from the haunts of corruption, have encountered few temptations, and therefore have comparatively few open and flagrant sins to repent of. To such as, being thus favoured, have improved their inestimable advantages; religion is indeed a cloudless sun, "the source of light, and life, and joy, and genial warmth, and plastic energy." But public education is now fashionable; and it seems to be accepted as a clear truth, that no intellectual eminence can be expected without it. Whether this be so, let abler judges determine; it is enough for me to observe, that few parents possess courage enough to question the certainty of this axiom, or, (which would be much more noble) while they allow its authority, to prefer sanctity of morals before any literary endowments. Public schools, however, are the very seats and nurseries of vice. It may be unavoidable or it may not: "Non est leve tot puero-

rum observare manus;" but the fact is indisputable. None can pass through a large seminary without being pretty intimately acquainted with vice; and few, alas! very few, without tasting too largely of that poisoned bowl. The hour of grace and repentance at length arrives, and they are astonished at their former fatuity. The young convert looks back with inexpressible regret to those hours which have been wasted in folly, or worse than folly; and the more lively his sense of the newly discovered mercies, the more piercing his anguish for past indulgencies. Is it not natural, is it not fitting, that a Christian so situated should for some time be at least serious? Is it nothing to have provoked the God of all power, and purity, and mercy? Nothing to have crucified our Redeemer afresh? Nothing to have grieved the Spirit of consolation? *We* may forget, but the Creator and Lord of the universe will not forget. *We* may suffer our former crimes to fade away in the vista of succeeding years; but to God there is neither past nor future. HE IS. Before the throne of his justice our sins are for ever present; and from that throne must the thunders of vengeance for ever be poured forth, if their rage had not been exhausted in the sufferings of the redeeming Emmanuel. Let us not think it strange then, if they who were once the "servants of sin" are seen at times mourning over their errors. Such sorrow, it must be allowed, is, to say no more, at least a seemly attendant of regeneration. Her tears shall soften the smiles of reviving joy; and the in-

cense of gratitude ascend to heaven with a sweeter savour, if wafted by the sighs of a broken and contrite heart.

But the pangs of recollection are not the only griefs which agitate the young convert. There are groans for the past, and fears for the future. Conversion is not the work of a day. In truth, religious habits are like other habits, they "grow with our growth;" and he must be ignorant of human nature, as well as of experimental religion, who thinks that neither time nor exercise is necessary to "build up the perfect man." In the infancy of Christianity, as in the infancy of life, we tremble at the rustling of a leaf. Our fears are necessary to our safety. Yet the Apostle is right, "Fear hath torment." Our consolation is this, "that the divine strength is made perfect in our weakness."

Besides all this, though I would not be thought either superstitious or presumptuous, I cannot help thinking, that it generally seems good to our heavenly Father to visit his adopted children, and particularly those who were once rebellious, with special afflictions, proportioned to their necessities, sometimes open, and sometimes secret, not only as trials of our faith, but to humble us, and wean us more entirely "from a world we love too well." This opinion will seem probable or groundless to different Christians according to their several experiences; yet I must think that He, who understood these matters full as well as we, meant to describe,

and has actually described the common course and stages of our pilgrimage, when he tells us to “rejoice in tribulations: because tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” Here we see that the race begins in pain, but ends in triumph. “We sow in tears, but reap in joy.” Be this however as it may; we may obviously expect from the causes above assigned, that many young converts will be occasionally dejected; and unless my assumptions are unfounded, a considerable share of the melancholy visible in religionists is thus sufficiently accounted for.

Yet after all, the view which I have taken of this subject is in some sense still imperfect. The principal causes have been noticed, which account for the apparent dejection of Christians, where it is habitual or frequently recurring; but where it is only occasional, the sources are as various as the dispositions of men, and the diversified events of life. Melancholy may sometimes be a trial from God, and sometimes a temptation from the Devil. Men are sometimes weak in faith, and sometimes erroneous in practice. Christians too are not at all exempted from the cares and distresses of the world. They are exposed to bodily disease, and to mental anxieties. They are plagued like others by their children and their servants, harassed with points in law or casuistry, frightened by dreams, alarmed with politics, and eat, drink, walk, or talk themselves into melancholy. “*Quantulacunque adeo est occasio sufficit.*” That is to say, in the weakness of

our present nature, the most trifling incident may produce a transient depression ; and we might as well attempt to assign a cause for every change of the wind, as for every fluctuation of the spirits. There is however one occasion of melancholy which I shall particularise, because it is not only of a general nature, but is, and from its nature must be, peculiar to sincere Christians. Mr. Hume said he never knew a religious man who was not melancholy ; to which Bishop Horne replied, “ that the sight of him would make a devout person melancholy at any time.” The good Bishop was happy at repartee ; but what he stated with pleasantry, is very seriously true. The world is a scene of woe, and such infidel philosophers as Mr. Hume enjoy only a dreadful pre-eminence in guilt and misery. Nothing but the moral apathy which we partly inherit with our corrupt nature, and have in part contracted by habit, could render us as insensible as we are to the wretchedness which surrounds us. The Christian feels this more sensibly than other men. As his moral nature is refined, his moral feelings are quickened. He becomes more acutely and painfully alive to the indignities which he sees daily offered to his best benefactor ; more conscious (and who can be conscious without compassion ?) of the tempest gathering over the heads of the hapless criminals. We weep over a widow or orphan faint with disease, and pining away in solitude ; and we do well. These are the best instincts of our nature. Yet such a scene, though wrought up



with all the savage horror which the pencil of a Michael Angelo could give it, is mild, and gay, and joyous, compared with the hideous spectacle of an immortal and accountable agent plunging hourly deeper and deeper in destruction, whirled on blindly and impetuously to the very brink of the fiery gulph that yawns to receive him. The tender Christian, in contemplating such an object, is forced to realize the fiction of the painter, and hide his eyes from those miseries which he cannot relieve, yet shudders to contemplate.

It is impossible to close this paper without adding a few words on the medicines to be selected by religious men, as the best antidotes to melancholy. We all "lie open to the shafts of the Almighty;" how open, we little think, till his arrows are in our hearts. If however we would find consolations in the moment of affliction, they must not merely be sought at the time of need, but wrought into our moral habit long before. Philosophy will teach us, that to those who are burthened with constitutional melancholy, precepts of wisdom are never less acceptable than in the hour of anguish. When the avenues of the heart are shut to joy, they are seldom open to admonition; and the same causes which throw a gloom over the objects around us, will cast even the best topics of comfort into the common shade. This it was which made the wise king say, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" As to others whose dejection arises from external causes, they

will hardly hope to find comfort in their weakness, from those reflections which they despised in their strength.

The means which occur to me as most likely to fortify us against afflictions, and to sustain us under them, are,

1. Not to be too studious of happiness in this life ;—to consider the present world as a state of probation, rather than enjoyment, and to study therefore to moderate our wishes, and spiritualize our affections. Much of the misery of youth, and no small share of the unhappiness of riper years, arise from our too great eagerness after felicity. That man will not frequently nor long be wretched, whose heart is really in heaven ; who, knowing that he has here no abiding mansion, seeks the glory of God, without being ambitious of the honour, or even very solicitous for the conveniences of this world. He who cherishes no expectations, can suffer no disappointments. He who has little, can lose little. If we walk as pilgrims, we shall walk safely. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.* Even in the days of feudal anarchy, the palmer, protected only by his staff and amice, was always sacred from injury.

2. To put our trust in God, casting all our cares on him, in the full persuasion that he careth for us. Properly speaking, we should mourn for nothing but sin, for we know that the world is under the constant governance of perfect wisdom, power, and goodness. What then can we fear, what can we

lament, but resistance to his will? Laying however metaphysics aside, we know and are assured that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God." Well therefore may we rejoice in tribulation, while we continue the dutiful children of God. If we are afflicted, we know that we ought to be afflicted, and may kiss the rod which smites us. A deep practical conviction of the constant agency of the Almighty, is the great source of consolation allowed us, amid the fearful and perplexing changes of this world. He only can be securely happy, who, in spite of the apparent confusion with which men and things, actions and sufferings, good and evil, are mingled together, can recognize by faith a latent order ;

Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,  
And smiling say, My Father made them all.

"The earth may shake, the pillars of the world may tremble under us, the countenance of the heaven may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, and the stars their glory; but concerning the man that trusteth in God, he knows in whom he hath believed, he is not ignorant whose precious blood hath been shed for him, he hath a Shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power." HOOKER.

S. To love and live with our Christian brethren. Tillotson's definition of happiness is, "to enjoy what we desire, and to live with those we love." Indeed, a large portion of our happiness in life

being dependent on others, common sense will teach us to associate intimately with those, whose opinions, tastes, and tempers accord to our own. Never was a more bountiful provision made for the happiness of Christians, than in that injunction of their blessed Master—"Love one another." I have often thought that all the evils of contempt and persecution, which the primitive brethren endured, were probably more than compensated by the closeness of their union in Christ, and the ardour of their mutual affections; an union cemented by their common dangers; affections heightened by their common sufferings.

Each of the three topics which I have been urging admits of great expansion. I have only touched them cursorily. The first remedy is preventive, and diminishes the power of earthly disasters to injure us. The second may enable us to sustain afflictions with cheerful firmness. And the third provides a fund of benign enjoyment which may brighten the most brilliant, and cheer our darkest moments.

I know that Christianity supplies numberless other means of consolation, and sources of joy. I do not even know that those which I have selected are always the most efficient; but they seem to me the most certain and the most easy of attainment. The ardour of divine love, the aspirations of piety, the hopes of immortal glory, may pour into the mind in its happier moments a flood of holy rapture. These heavenly desires and affections are however

a little dependent on the animal frame, and where there is any tendency to constitutional dejection, will sometimes fail even the best of men. But to detach ourselves from the things of this world, to repose confidently on our God, and to derive pleasure from the company of good men, are attainments (if I may so term them) always open to all. The proper use of our common faculties, and the proper direction of our natural feelings, are the only requisites.

To conclude.—It is not altogether useless to shew that the melancholy observable in religious men may be sufficiently accounted for, and Christianity cleared of an ungrounded charge. The infidel is thus checked in his triumphs, and the secret but uneasy apprehensions of some weak brethren removed. Yet we have little reason to mourn over the sufferers. The Father of mercy chastens not his children without a cause, and happy are they who are thought worthy of his paternal correction. Afflictions indeed of every kind “for the present seem grievous:” and grievous they will seem, while we abide in this fleshly tabernacle, where sense, not reason, presides. Yet let us not forget the words of the Roman historian, which Hooker so happily applies to the servants of Christ, complaining of the hardships they endure in his service. “Ego sic existimabam (uti patrem sæpe meum prædicantem audiveram) qui vestram amicitiam colerent, eos multum laborem suscipere, cæterum ex omnibus maxime tutos esse.” Alas, what is it we lament?



That we are safe in a world of danger, and pay the price of a few tears for immortal glory. Is this rational, is it manly? Surely the hour shall come, when after a thousand ages spent in advancing happiness, we shall look back on the light and shade which chequered these days of our infancy, with the same complacent pity which we feel at the tears and smiles of a baby. We now manage to make even a short life seem long, by the multitude of our cares; yet all the mighty events which have swelled the annals of six thousand years shall one day be confounded, and appear but a single and transient point in the long perspective. Even while we are still mortal, while our ears ring with the busy hum around us, and our senses are continually drawing us off from divine enjoyments, those senses are mercifully ordained to be their own correctives, and become the monitors of true wisdom. We may listen fondly to the voice of flattery, but we *must* hear too the voice of affliction. The same eye, which sees the pleasures of the world, surveys also its vicissitudes; and awful are these lessons. The scenes of this life, whether bright with joy, or darkened with horror, pass swiftly by. The great and the wise are dropping around us. Empires are changing their limits; new dynasties and new kingdoms rise before us as we gaze. The prince of power of this world triumphs. "Yet the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat:

the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

“It remains, that they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE CHARACTER  
OF CHRIST.

1809.

“ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

IT is said by Plato, in some part of his works, that if virtue, in her native beauty, could be presented to the eyes of men, she would command without difficulty their admiration and homage. The philosopher seems to have judged too highly of his kind. Certain at least it is, that a perfect pattern of moral excellence has been exhibited to the world, yet vice is still loved and followed: Christ has long since been manifested, but men “ love darkness rather than light.” “ To them” (however, says the apostle,) “ who received him, gave he power to become the sons of God:” and, unquestionably, as the character of our blessed Saviour is one of the most convincing evidences of the truth of the Gospel he promulgated, so is it, beyond competition, the best model which his servants can choose for their imitation. To study this, will be ever our duty and our happiness; and the ensuing reflections, even if they should be thought to have little claim to originality, will not be useless, if they renew to the writer and the reader considerations which should ever be present to both.

In order to our understanding justly the character of our Redeemer, it would be necessary, first, to examine the qualities of which it was composed, separately; and then survey their general effect: that we might see both the perfectness of each grace, and the symmetry of the whole. To fill up such an outline completely, would be a great and valuable performance. To this the following reflections have no claim, but they are loosely adjusted to that model.

The leading feature in the character of Jesus Christ unquestionably was, Devotedness to the service of God. He lived only to do his will. It was his meat and drink; his daily, hourly, momentary occupation. From this, pleasure had no charms to seduce, pain no power to terrify him. At the table, in the temple, on the mount, by the way-side, weary, hungry, defamed, by night, by day, in every state and every place, weeping over the grave of Lazarus, riding triumphantly into Jerusalem, praying in the garden, hanging on the cross, Jesus was still the same—"he did the will of the Father who sent him." Fancy can imagine nothing more sublime than the unity of that great purpose.

This devotedness of spirit was sustained by an unfailling Trust in God. "He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Faith, the great principle of the second covenant, the act by which fallen man receives the dispensation of mercy, which Jesus studiously magnified in his preaching, he nobly illustrated by his example. Whatever unbelief might be found in others, the faith of Christ never

faltered. Though vexed with the opposition of the Jews, and discouraged by the dulness of his disciples, he stayed himself still upon his God, and persevered in the work assigned him. Betrayed by his follower, deserted by his friends, confounded by the powers of darkness, and so dismayed and tortured that his wounded soul broke out in the bitter expostulation, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" still his faith was firm: and in his dying words, "it is finished," he recognized the immutable counsels and declarations of God, and pronounced them completed.

It is observable, that a hope of future glory, which sceptics have often arraigned as a mean, because a mercenary motive, and even some pious persons have omitted or discountenanced, was very differently esteemed by HIM who knew the value of the promised inheritance: "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." Hope has, perhaps, been too seldom mentioned and enforced in modern times. When St. Paul prayed for the Ephesians, it was, that "they might know the hope of their calling, and the riches of their glorious inheritance, and the exceeding great power of God towards them that believe."

Jesus declared, that to love God with all our heart, is the first and great commandment; and it cannot be questioned that what he enjoined he practised. Beloved himself of God, as his only begotten Son, he undoubtedly returned to his Father love unmeasured and incomprehensible. Yet we



may observe, and it demands our serious attention, that this all-powerful, all constraining love broke out into no enthusiastic fervours. In the bosom of the Redeemer, doubtless, it was a principle of joy and consolation unspeakable; but in his outward behaviour, it was chiefly visible in the steady cheerfulness with which he did and suffered whatever it pleased his heavenly Father to command or to inflict. It was a spring of action, not of mere emotion; a source of such intimate and heart-felt satisfaction, that it sought neither aid nor observation from others. Yet the love of Christ to God had nothing in it of mystical abstraction, nor did it require to be nursed in seclusion. It had strength enough to live in the midst of business and tumults.

Of Christ's devotional exercises but little is told us; only it appears that they were at times long and earnest, and that he so highly regarded them, as to rise up a great while before day for the purpose of attending on them. From some passages in his life, it seems probable that he held a constant mental communion with his heavenly Father; and perhaps the reason, why more particulars have not been recorded, may be, that external acts, which form so exceedingly small a part of this duty, are too commonly regarded by men as the whole of it. There seems no reason to suppose that petitions for strength to do the will of God were excluded from our Saviour's prayers; for an angel would not have been sent to communicate what he did not need, and what he needed we may be assured he prayed for.

Do we believe then, that Christ, to whom the Spirit was given without measure, one with the Father, for the weakness of the nature he assumed, required and asked for aid from heaven; and shall we, who add corruption to infirmity, and sin to corruption, shall we presume to trust in our own strength?

The social and personal virtues most remarkable in the character of Christ, were Love to Man, Humility, Disinterestedness, and Constancy. The first of these was so wrought into the tenor of his whole life, that every act, either directly or remotely, had a reference to the happiness of others. This, however, was not the whole. He not only did good, but he did it with tenderness. He was benevolent in little things as well as in great ones; in manner as in substance. Neither the opposition of his enemies, nor the blindness of the disciples, nor the oppressive labours of his ministry, ever moved him to haste or fretfulness. A striking instance of his equanimity and tenderness may be seen in Mark vi. 31. et seq.—Jesus and the apostles were so pressed upon by the multitude, that they had not time to eat. And he said, Come ye apart into the wilderness and rest awhile. So they went by ship into a desert place. But the people ran a-foot and came thither before him. Jesus then, going out of the vessel, saw a great multitude: they allowed him no respite. What ensued? Surely he was vexed to find himself thus persecuted. and gave them a sharp reproof, or turned sullenly away, or at least he retreated from their importunity. The Evangelist

speaks otherwise: " he had compassion on them." It is the more important to note the unvarying benignity of heart which our Redeemer exhibited in the midst of opposition and obloquy, because many persons, of high religious profession, are observed to be peculiarly deficient in the government of their tempers. This cannot but be matter of affliction to all true Christians : and worldly people, seeing that a regard to convenience and good-breeding frequently effects more in this branch of self-discipline than the lofty motives avowed by such friends of religion, judge harshly of the men, and imbibe a secret prejudice against religion itself. They, however, who condemn, should recollect that this is an age of courtesy, in which good-nature bears a high price, and is more generally cultivated than other virtues ; that it is therefore a quality, in respect of which a comparison cannot fairly be instituted between those who profess religion and those who neglect it. On the other hand, let all who name the name of Christ remember, that he never sanctioned, either by example or precept, the least bitterness of disposition or irregularity of temper, but gave to his disciples a new commandment of love, the pledge of their allegiance, which is quite inconsistent with both ; that St. James has declared the religion of the man who bridles not his tongue, to be vain ; and that it is one of the leading characteristics of charity, the first of Christian graces, without which faith and knowledge and liberality are alike unprofitable, that " it suffers long, and is kind." He whose temper is unchas-

tised has need to examine his foundations with great wariness: St. Paul pronounces such persons to be carnal, and we know that “to [be carnally-minded is death.” Men who profess religion, and live much in religious circles, ought to guard particularly against neglecting those virtues which happen to be most admired and cultivated in the world.

Jesus Christ was humble. His condescension in coming into the world, the station he chose in it, his actions, his demeanour, his death, all testified a humility, which, though it never will be equalled, must by all be imitated. There is, however, a peculiarity in the humility of Christ which deserves attention. As he was without sin, he could not be sensible of that deep humiliation which a consciousness of guilt awakens in a true Christian. It is probable, that the lowliness of mind, for which he was so remarkable, arose from a very quick perception and elevated view of the perfections of God. A feeling, similar in kind though in degree far inferior, will be found in most pious persons; and its energy is generally in proportion to their advances in piety and holiness. This is the main reason, though not the only one, why men who grow in grace will always be seen to grow also in humility.

Perhaps there is no Christian grace respecting which we are more apt to deceive ourselves, than humility. It is an easy thing for a man to bemoan his corruption. It is not a very difficult matter even to feel and lament its burthen. God is so pure, and we so sinful, that nothing but common honesty

seems necessary, through divine grace, to make us perceive and confess our meanness. But it is very possible for a man to be humble towards God, and proud towards his fellow creatures. The best, because the most trying, tests of true lowliness of mind, are to be found in our daily conversation with men. Do we really obey the Apostle's directions, "to esteem others better than ourselves?" Are we willing to take the lowest place in society, yielding to others the pre-eminence in reputation for parts, learning, and accomplishments; cheerfully accepting reproof, forgiving insults, forgetting mortifications, and resigning the means or opportunities of distinction, if unfavourable to a Christian spirit? Humility is best known among equals. With God we can have no rivalry. It should appear, too, in our behaviour and actions, rather than in our language; for such was the humility of Christ. He left the glory of his Father; he took on him the form of a servant; he instructed the mean; he lived with men of low estate; he washed his disciples' feet; he refused worldly honour; he died the death of a malefactor. These are evidences of humility which are quite unequivocal.

Among the virtues most eminent in our Redeemer's character, two others were noticed above; Disinterestedness and Constancy; but a few words must suffice for these.

Disinterestedness, be it remembered, differs from self-denial. Self-denial is an act, disinterestedness is a habit.



I know of no word in our language, which fully embraces and designates that energy in action and endurance, which I meant to include in the term *Constancy*. It is compounded of courage, fortitude, perseverance, and patience; qualities so necessary to sustain and give efficiency to every other virtue, that they resemble those plastic principles in the physical world, without which all material bodies might quickly be dissipated and lost. The perfection in which these were found in Jesus Christ will be better understood, if we recollect, that power of every description is far less certainly, though more theatrically, exhibited in short violent efforts, than by a steady, permanent, unwearied, unyielding agency and progression. Nor let us forget the moral; “Through faith and *patience* we inherit the promises;” “The good soldier of Christ must endure hardness.”

There is a lesson of no little moment to be learnt from contemplating that part of our Saviour’s character which has last been noticed. Christians, like others, must frequently be engaged in scenes of active life, where, in the general conflict, dishonest intentions, allied to boldness and dexterity, will often be successful. Those, therefore, whose passions are naturally vehement, and who are endowed with powerful understandings, will feel desirous to oppose force by force, and subdue with a strong hand the lawless endeavours of their antagonists. In the debates of public assemblies, where an appeal to the bad passions of mankind is so lamentably

effective, the temptation is very great. But Christ is our best instructor. He surely was not deficient in strength of character. He had to contend, too, with opponents wicked, impassioned, and formidable. Yet he rarely addressed his worst enemies in terms of reproach; never in the language of bitterness or contumely. His energy was without impetuosity. Calm and holy, it neither sought assistance from any evil thing in his own nature, nor alliance with the bad passions of others. It was indeed strength invincible, but strength directed by wisdom, and chastised by meekness.

The view of our Redeemer's character still unexamined—a view, I mean, of its symmetry and perfectness—is perhaps less practically useful than the contemplation of the particular graces which composed it; yet certainly it opens a field of very curious and very profitable speculation.

It is a common remark, that a principle of compensation runs through the works of God. In the physical and intellectual world this is observable; and so also in morals: the stronger virtues are seldom found without an alloy of austerity; and the softer are nearly allied to weakness. It is plain that compensation implies defect; and we therefore reasonably might suppose that in the character of Christ the rule should be no longer verified. And thus we find it. His force was without harshness, his tenderness free from imbecility. Nor is this all. Not only were his virtues unaccompanied with their kindred failings, but the most opposite excellencies

were found in him in equal perfection. The Emmanuel of God possessed an elevation of mind, and sublimity in his conception of divine things, such as man never approached to ; yet with what facility, what grace, what propriety, what simple beauty, did he adapt his discourses to the ignorant multitude around him ? His heart was raised far above this world, and evidently maintained an intimate communion with the Father of spirits : yet he conversed freely with mankind : was often engaged in the tumult of crowds and contention ; and on all occasions maintained a wakeful regard to the wants and wishes, the joys and sorrows, of those around him. Who ever beheld, who ever could have conceived, humility so deep, so perfect ! His dignity was equal. With what unconquerable energy of soul did he act and endure ! His whole life was passed in labours and privations. He was harassed, weary, hungry, without a home, despised, defamed, forsaken, persecuted : still his constancy was unshaken ; and, pressing towards the mark of his high calling, he triumphed over the infirmities of nature, defeated the opposition and malice of his enemies, and trampled under his feet the powers of darkness. Surely such lofty and masculine qualities could not be allied to a gentle and tender disposition : the softer virtues could hardly have lived amidst the severity of such continual suffering and conflict !— He wept over Lazarus ; he wept over Jerusalem ; he pitied the unhappy ; he instructed the ignorant ; he healed the sick ; he fed the hungry ; he bore

with all the dulness and contradiction of sinners ; in the hour of darkness, when himself most needed comfort, he consoled and strengthened those who were about to forsake him in his extremity ; from the cross he commanded John to sustain his desolate parent ; in death he prayed for his murderers. Truly we may exclaim with the apostle, " Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel."

The view of our Redeemer's character last exhibited deserves, and, I am persuaded, would amply repay, the deepest and most attentive consideration ; but I shall only further notice two striking passages which may tend to illustrate it, Consider the sublimity of that blessed invitation, " Come unto me; all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest : take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*" Who, but Christ, ever called on men to imitate his lowliness ? There is a simple unaffected greatness in this command, to which I am persuaded no parallel can be found in history or fiction. Christ was so humble, that he could exalt his humility into a standard, without rendering it questionable. Just after the Last Supper, when Jesus had immediately and fully present to his mind the sufferings he was about to endure, the foresight of which soon afterwards dreadfully affected him, he girded himself with a towel, and washed in succession the feet of all his disciples. This apparently trifling act, trifling at least in comparison of what he had done and was about to do, Christ performed in a moment



which seemed to call on him to awaken all his energies for the approaching conflict; when a deep reserve and severe self-collection would, in any other man, have appeared more suitable to the occasion. Great men have sometimes assumed an air of carelessness on the near approach of peril, when it was necessary to their safety; many have evinced composure in their sufferings, while sustained by the admiration of the multitudes who witnessed them; some have even risen so high as to approach with a dignified fortitude to tortures for the endurance of which no compensation could be found in applause: but never was it before heard, that a man, affected with the deepest sense of the sufferings about to overtake him—sufferings known only to himself—should not only possess sufficient recollection to perform every office, of benevolence to those around him, but even stoop to the humblest act of condescension, in an hour which seemed to demand assistance from the loftiest and sternest principles of his nature.

Christians should observe, and frequently consider, the perfect consistency visible in every part of their Redeemer's life and conversation. It is the want of this moral symmetry, which robs religion of its glory, and those who embrace it of their privileges and peace. Nor only this. Of all self-deceptions, that is far the most alarming which respects our everlasting interests; and the truth is, whatever flattery we may permit or practise, that no man is safe, who either overlooks in himself, when he might



know, or knowingly perseveres in any temper or practice whatsoever contrary to the precepts or example of Jesus Christ. All, therefore, must watch; those particularly who are high in knowledge or reputation; for, as are their advantages, so are their temptations. It is in religion as in the field; the post of glory is the post of danger: and danger, if it fail to awaken us to superior diligence and watchfulness, will overwhelm us while we slumber. How thankful then should we be for advice; how eager to accept it, even from our enemies; how habitually diffident of ourselves! There is a peculiarity too in Christianity, which makes a thorough consistency absolutely indispensable. The doctrines it inculcates, and the temper and duties it enjoins, are of such a nature, that a partial acceptance of either certainly cannot be considered as so much clear gain, and may be very little better than an entire rejection of both. In some particulars this is plain, as in the abuse of the doctrines of grace; but it is true also, though less obvious, in the circle of the moral duties. Thus zeal, neither enlightened by knowledge, nor chastised by humility, is only energetic bigotry. Devotion, without purity, is profaneness; and, allied to any presumptuous sin, it is enthusiasm and hypocrisy. Even humility itself, lovely as it is, if separated from the sustaining and moving principles of Christianity, particularly from trust in God and devotedness to his service, would so abase and neutralize the character, that it may be doubted whether alone it would be worth retaining.

What self-denial is in its solitary effect, the history of the monastic orders awfully instructs us. We have seen the same principle, which, cherished by the genial warmth of love, starts forth to life and beauty, supporting, strengthening, and adorning every sister grace; unnaturally prolific of whatever is base and cruel, of

“ All monstrous, all prodigious things,  
“ Abominable, unutterable.”

This paper has become long, but the subject is very ample; and surely the motives to an intimate acquaintance with the character of Christ, are, above all expression, powerful and affecting. He is our Lord God, the Captain of our Salvation. By him we have redemption—in him we have strength—with him we hope to reign for ever in glory. Yet a few years, and they who are found worthy shall be translated into the kingdom of the Lamb, who shall “ lead them to fountains of living waters, and wipe away all tears from their eyes.” And shall we not labour then, while on earth, to be conformed to his image, that we may be made meet for the promised inheritance; to be holy and heavenly, that we may even now walk in his light, and taste his mercy, and feel his truth? This is the path in which he would lead us, the path of peace and joy. If we follow him here, he will own us hereafter; if he be our example upon earth, he will be in heaven our everlasting and exceeding great reward.

PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF  
CHRIST'S ATONEMENT.

1810.

“The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of  
the world.”

JESUS CHRIST, after he had exhibited in his life a pattern of perfect holiness, closed the scene by offering himself up on the cross as an atonement for sin.

This is the great and capital truth opened to us in the Gospel History. The circumstances of our Saviour's life are only a prelude to it; his resurrection attested it; and the whole body of doctrines and precepts delivered by the apostles flows directly from it. Now it is obvious that the sufferings and death of Christ might have wrought the same effects in the divine dispensations, though a knowledge of that event had never been communicated to man. God might have been just, and the justifier of sinners, without exhibiting to his creatures the method by which the perfection and moral harmony of his character are secured.

Yet though the mercy of our heavenly Father is in its nature quite distinct from, and wholly in-

dependent of, the acquaintance we may happen to have with the method ordained for providing it, we find that the writers of the New Testament uniformly represent the *promulgation* to man of the doctrine of atonement by the blood of Jesus, as a most signal instance of divine bounty.

Undoubtedly the Gospel, considered merely as a Gospel of peace, deserved to be celebrated with hymns of joy and thanksgiving.—To the heathen world the certain knowledge that God would pardon sin on their sincere repentance, was a matter of the highest value. Yet something more than this is plainly intended in the strong expressions of our Saviour and his apostles. Christians are represented as enjoying advantages, in their possession of evangelical truth, far greater than a bare assurance of the merciful disposition of their heavenly Governor could have conveyed. The key to this must surely be found in the practical power of the doctrine of the cross of Christ upon the hearts and lives of men.

The tracts contained in the book which, in distinction, we term the Bible, unquestionably develop the most singular history and most original system of philosophy ever promulgated. With the history I have no concern at present. The sum of its philosophy, if I understand it rightly, is this:—The world—that is, men generally, without noticing degrees—is declared to be ignorant and corrupt: corrupt in ignorance, ignorant because corrupt, and wretched alike in both. This wretchedness is not described as light or transitory; but is depicted in

the strongest colours. Bondage, darkness, and death, are the gloomy images by which it is generally represented; and, though a nice accuracy of expression is plainly avoided, there are numerous passages of Scripture which concur with the analogy of natural things, to make it probable that this unhappy state is likely to endure through endless ages, and to become as it advances darker and more desperate. In order that we may escape from so sad a condition, the Scriptures call upon us to come to God *by faith*; which, in substance, I understand thus:—Man, trusting in his own strength and wisdom, has gone on from age to age in misery and sin. He neither understands what it is that constitutes happiness, nor could attain to it if he did. He sees not, that to be alienated from God is to be wretched; or if a few among the wisest, perceiving the vanity of earthly things, begin to suspect this, they know so little what God is, or how his favour is to be secured, that their philosophy ends at last in rhapsody and mysticism. The Almighty, pitying his creatures, tells them that they are not only in a very unhappy condition, which they a little (though but a little) suspected; but that they are exceedingly blind and foolish, which, for the most part, they suspected not at all;—that if they would be happy, they must come to Him, and laying aside for ever their own silly conceits about what is good, learn the way of life and walk in it. This coming to God (or however else we please to express it), and taking his word for our rule of conduct, in the



full conviction that it will issue greatly to our advantage ; as it is obviously the strongest expression of faith, so it is, I apprehend, what is primarily and principally meant by that word in both Testaments.

Struck with such an invitation, and touched by the preventing grace of God, many are led to inquire more particularly into the nature of that which promises so much. On examination it appears, that what God declares to be needful for happiness is wholly different from all the things which a majority of mankind are pursuing. He does not give us rules for lengthening our existence, fortifying our health, improving our fortunes, or advancing our stations in this life ; for quickening or multiplying the common sources or objects of enjoyment : nor even (at least properly, and for their own sake) does he teach us how our affections may become more lively, or our understandings acquire strength and elevation. The word of God, condemning many, and neglecting the residue of these things, calls on all, who will listen, to labour assiduously for the attainment of a certain character or nature of mind, which is composed of many particular qualities, and is usually denominated by the term holiness, or some equivalent expression. This character, it is declared, will most nearly assimilate us to God ; make us capable here of enjoying a portion of that felicity which he possesses without measure ; and, by securing to us his favour, bring us, after this life is ended, to a state far more per-

fect and glorious, than at present we can either enjoy or conceive.

All this, we see, might have been known without our having any apprehension of the doctrine of a Redeemer: but the value of that doctrine cannot be understood without a just apprehension of the state of things for which it was provided. I speak particularly of the *doctrine*. The value of redemption as a fact, is quite a different matter from the value of the knowledge of that fact. This is called “the knowledge of salvation—good tidings of great joy.” It is indeed a joyful thing to hear that salvation is attainable; but how much more joyful to be taught the means, and furnished with the most pressing motives for attaining it? For the present purpose, salvation and holiness may be considered as the same; and for the promotion of holiness the doctrine of the Atonement is, above all rivalry, most efficient. This we have seen is the great scope of Revelation; this then, must surely constitute the chief blessedness of evangelical truth. “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—Let us consider the subject a little more nearly.

God is so far removed from our conceptions; the perfection of his character is so awful; we are so much under the dominion of sensible objects, and he is so little subjected to the senses; that our imperfect nature seems to require aid in raising itself

up to him. We need a stage on which to rest in our ascent. The indistinctness too, with which we conceive an immaterial, eternal, and infinite Being, concurs with his greatness to prevent our affections opening towards him with all that ardour which his excellence and our happiness equally require. Christ is "over all God blessed for ever;" but God (if I may so speak) veiled of his effulgence. Having taken on him the nature of men, he is not ashamed to call them brethren: and as brethren, we on our parts can turn towards him with complacency and confidence. In fancy we can even behold him, such as he once was in the days of his flesh; and when we read the tale of his sufferings, we feel all those emotions and sympathies swelling in our bosoms, which attach us so closely to our own kindred. Recollecting what he was, we can think of what he is, without terror; and in his presence, and under his protection, can approach with joy even that awful seat where holiness and justice for ever reside.

Of all the wonderful things which constitute, or are intimately connected with, the dispensation of grace, perhaps there is none of which we have so inadequate a conception as sin, its essential deformity and most fatal tendency. When we talk to a careless liver of the guilt of his ordinary conversation in the world, and describe sin in the fearful language of the Bible, we seem to him as dreamers. Even the most humble and advanced Christian finds it difficult to fix in his mind such a

sense of the sanctity of God's law, and the terrible profaneness of violating it, as corresponds in any tolerable degree with the measure of these things in holy writ. Yet certainly it most nearly concerns us to appreciate them justly. Now it is impossible to conceive any truth so calculated to penetrate us with a just horror of sin in general, and with the deepest confusion for our own offences, as the doctrine of the cross. It stamps upon evil a character of darkness and horror which no tongue can utter: it bears in its amazing mercy the most awful testimony to the majesty and justice of God; and while it pours gladness into the bosom of the penitent, speaks death to the presumptuous rebel.—It is worth observing in this place, that an objection sometimes made to Revelation, on account of the astonishing costliness of the sacrifice which it declares to have been provided as an atonement for guilt, admits of the same reply which may be offered to the common argument against the moral character of God, from the extent and intensity of suffering allowed to prevail in the world: both are calculated to attest visibly, and to all ages, the dreadful consequences of sin. Can it be said that the apprehensions entertained of this by mankind are generally such, that we can think the evidence has been more than sufficient?

“In patience possess ye your souls.” This was the solemn precept and premonition of Christ himself; of him who, “when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth



righteously ;”—“ who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Of what importance it is to “ patient continuance in well doing,” that Christians should learn constancy under afflictions ; and of what efficacy the example of a suffering Saviour was believed by the apostles to be, for working such a temper in their disciples ; the Epistles of the New Testament every where attest. “ Through faith and patience ye inherit the promises.” “ We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end.” “ Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” “ It is better that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil doing ; for Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust.” “ Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” “ Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” It is not indeed accurate to define virtue, as some have done, the sacrificing of a present for a future greater good : virtue must ever be essentially the same ; and the day will assuredly come, to every true servant of God, when holiness will be the most delightful of all exercises, unaccompanied even with the appearance of a loss : yet, in our present state, with corrupt hearts in a corrupt world, it cannot be denied that persevering self-denial is at the basis of all moral excellence. We must be ready to abandon



much, and endure much, if Heaven is the prize we seek for.

There is another Christian grace, of the highest worth, which is intimately connected with self-denial, and peculiarly taught in the doctrine of the cross,—Humility. Can we see the Son of God crucified for our sins, and still indulge a lofty, self-gratulating spirit? Had our crimes brought a friend, a wife, or child, to an infamous death, should we dare stalk round the world with a triumphant look, and proud, braggart deportment? In such a case, surely the very worst would hide his face in the dust. But we have crucified the Lord of life: our crimes have brought the ever-blessed Emmanuel to shame and suffering. A just view of the great superiority of moral worth over all other advantages, and such a sense of our own moral unworthiness, as the cross of Christ can alone teach, would effectually deliver us from that over-weening and selfish folly, which even the ablest of men, untaught in the school of Christ, are ever ready to mistake for magnanimity. It is not, however, the sufferings of our Saviour only, that should cover us with confusion: the recollection that his death is our life; his shame and sorrow our everlasting joy; these, surely, are thoughts, which, above all others, must empty us of selfishness, draw forth every grateful and generous affection, and bring us to the foot of the cross, in mingled tears and rapture, to join the song of angels; “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto

the Lamb, for ever and ever." Let it be remembered, that pride is a preference of ourselves; love and gratitude, a preference of others. These sentiments, therefore, cannot subsist together; and whatever tends to excite the better feelings, must tend also to expel the worse.

The last Christian grace, which I shall notice, as wrought more especially by the doctrine of the cross, is Spiritual-mindedness:—the source and pledge, the fruit and crown, of all. On this, assuredly, it is needless to enlarge. What says the apostle of the Gentiles? "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Throughout the New Testament, the death of Christ is spoken of as directly emblematic of, and above all other things effectual to produce, that death unto sin, and deadness to the pleasures of this world, which ever accompany a spiritual frame of mind.

We see, then, that the doctrine of the atonement—the *knowledge* of that great truth, which unknown might have wrought inestimable good for man—has a peculiar and most powerful tendency to excite an ardent love of God; a deep detestation of sin; patient self-denial; humility; and spiritual-mindedness. Let it now be considered how large a portion of holiness these graces themselves constitute, and how necessarily they imply or produce the rest, and, if the Scripture account of happiness be true,

we shall no longer feel any difficulty in understanding why the apostles have declared a knowledge of Christ crucified, to be so inestimable a blessing. We must also recollect, that the evangelical truths are admirably calculated to awaken the most animated feelings and affections of the heart; in doing which, they not only open the deepest fountains of satisfaction, but communicate a power and energy to the soul, which makes the attainment of the most perfect graces of holiness almost as delightful as their exercise.

The doctrine of the atonement is, I am persuaded, acknowledged, and its value in some degree felt, by a very large proportion of those who profess any seriousness at all on the subject of religion. It is too cardinal a truth to be overlooked; too comfortable an one to be wilfully neglected. We find, therefore, the satisfaction which Christ has made for sin mentioned by many, with a certain expression of trust and thankfulness, who, on the whole, are living very carelessly, and have exceedingly inadequate notions of the dispensation of grace in its other parts. This doctrine, however, can hardly be well understood, or cordially received, except by those who have known the burthen of sin; who feel their need of a Mediator, and love Christ, not merely as a being perfectly excellent and amiable, but as their Redeemer.—This is the nearest relation that subsists between Christ and his people. He has made, he preserves, he guides, protects, and blesses us; but all this he would have done though man had con-

tinued upright. To have become the Saviour of a guilty world, its deliverer from bondage and death, invests him with a character far dearer, because far more necessary, to all who can estimate its value. And what but the blindness, the death-sleep of sin, can hide its value from us? We may speculate, if we please, on the moral government of God, and marvel (it is, indeed, very marvellous) that he should have permitted a whole world to be sunk in guilt and ruin. We may estimate, if we will, the palliation which our offences receive from the infirm nature we inherit, and the evil examples that surround us. But, when our philosophy and our moral calculations are exhausted, let memory and conscience speak. Have you loved your Creator and Benefactor with your whole heart? Have you indeed preferred his favour before the pleasures of sense, of reason, of fancy, of ambition, of affection? Have you cordially believed, and acted on the belief, that to serve him with every faculty and every feeling, is true wisdom, and will issue in perfect happiness? Have you been holy and humble, just and pure in every thought and word and work? Happy, happy they (if any such there be,) who can honestly answer, Yes!—but not unhappy those, who knowing their sins, and confessing their unworthiness, have taken refuge in the sanctuary of a Redeemer, from the power and persecution of their enemies. I do not say that they who need a Saviour little will love him little: that is impossible: but surely those who feel that they need him much must love him ardently. Let



them cherish the holy fervour. It will pour gladness into their hearts. It will purge them of every low thought, every selfish and worldly affection ; as the sun, ascending in the rear of darkness, scatters the mists that lie heavy on the earth, and sheds upon every object the same glad and peaceful radiance in which his own glory is for ever enshrined.

There is one common and capital error on this subject, which must not be left unnoticed. Persons who do not live strictly are very apt to imagine that the Gospel is a mitigated law, and the death of Christ principally effective in softening the rigour and relaxing the straitness of the old commandment. This is a most fatal misapprehension of the whole matter. So totally is it at variance with the whole tenor of Scripture, that (if it were not presumptuous to speculate on the possible proceedings of God,) we might venture to say, if the law of perfect holiness could have allowed of any abatement, Christ had never died. That law, like its Author, is immutable. God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. "Be ye perfect," is the precept of both Testaments. It is among the most sublime and characteristic features of revelation, that, even in a scheme of condescension by which sinful beings are to be restored, and some provision therefore of necessity made for infirmity and corruption, the perfections of God are never compromised. The Scriptures never lower down the standard of holiness to the imperfections of man, but strive to raise his weakness to that noble and celestial height.



Every thing is in the ascendant. *Sursum Corda, Sursum Corda.* The doctrines, the precepts, the examples, the images, the language of the Bible—all breathe a tone of sublimity that ill harmonizes with low pursuits, sensual appetites, and worldly affections. Let us follow whither they lead us. He only is truly happy, who has happiness within himself; whose soul is free, and whose wants are satisfied: holiness alone is liberty; the favour of God, the only source of perfect and abiding satisfaction.

## ON SUBMISSION TO GOD.

1812.

WHEN we consider the relation in which we stand to that Almighty Being, who created us by his power, and who preserves us during every moment of our existence by the unceasing energy of his wisdom ; it seems of all truths the simplest and most obvious, that we ought to be subject to his disposal. When we recollect that He, who is our Sovereign by nature, unites in his adorable character every attribute which can attract our veneration, or claim our confidence, or win our love, duty seems too cold a term to express the regards which are due towards him. But when we reflect, that He who formed us by his power, and blessed us by his goodness, left not the world he made to perish in its wilful apostacy, but purchased again his own creation by the blood of his dear Son ; what language can adequately describe the feelings of glad obedience and grateful adoration, which should animate every child of this wise and gracious, insulted and indulgent Parent ! Yet man, fallen unhappy man, can forget alike the obligations of duty and of gratitude ! Thousands pass on from youth to age in

willing servitude to every passion of their nature, and to every caprice of vanity and opinion; while they dread and fly from his authority whose service is perfect freedom. And what shall we say of the best of us? Submission, which should be but our first duty, is reckoned amongst our highest attainments; and he is thought to be an advanced Christian, who is only not rebellious.

There was a time when submission to God was not counted among our burthens. In Eden, the seat of purity and joy, before sin had entered, and death by sin, our first parents walked gladly in the way their Maker had appointed them, happy in their mutual love, happy in a grateful admiration of Him who gave it, happy in that filial confidence which a sense of his perfections and of their own innocence inspired. To them, duty and enjoyment were one; the law of obedience was the path of peace. But they were tempted, and they fell. They fell, because they would be wiser than their Creator, and thought some better satisfaction might be found, by a breach of his holy commandments, than they had experienced in a cheerful submission to them. Such, at least, appears to have been the cause of their sad transgression; and such certainly is the history of a large part of the miserable adventures, in which their blind and unhappy offspring have ever since been engaged. God is their proper happiness. His redeeming mercy has opened to them again the gates of everlasting life. His law, holy and just, is the path that will conduct them thither:

his dispensations, secret or manifest, gentle or corrective, are ready, like guardian angels, to watch over them, and lead them safely in the right way, or call them back when they are wandering from it. But God they know not. They know themselves, their appetites, and passions. They know the world abounding on every side with allurements to gratification: and though age after age has testified to its vanity, and parents have still transmitted to their children the history of their own disappointments, the hopeless race is for ever renewed, and men follow after happiness in every direction, except that by which they might attain it.

Yet some there are, (in this happy land we may reasonably hope there are very many,) who by the mercy of God have been made sensible of the general error; and who feel that true good can only be found, by re-ascending towards that holy light, which cheered the blessed region whence our first parents wandered down into this land of shadows. These, surely, are deeply sensible of their own blindness; they have lamented their past follies; they have felt the blessedness of drawing near to God as to their reconciled Father; and they desire above all things to be for ever subject to his guidance and government. Yes, certainly, these are their settled feelings, their deliberate wishes. Were it otherwise, how could they reasonably believe themselves to be led by the Spirit of truth! And yet, even among the truly pious there are probably very few, who always preserve an equal temper of

mind amidst the changes and chances of this world. Some are agitated by their own distresses. Some are moved to surprize and grief at the afflictions which befall those who are most dear to them. And there are moments, perhaps (they should be only moments,) when even the most experienced Christian, though he may bow with unresisting submission under the hand of God, can scarcely lift up an eye of gratitude, or kiss with filial love the rod that chastens him.

It is neither to be expected nor desired, that we should become insensible to our own sufferings, or to those of others. He who is fainting in pain or sickness would think himself but mocked, by being told that he must throw aside his weakness, and rise superior to such infirmities. Nor is it by any means the nature of true religion to diminish our tenderness towards others. On the contrary, it opens the springs of every gentle feeling, and calls forth to new life and vigour every generous affection. Yet, notwithstanding this, it cannot be denied that we are far too apt to be dejected under the misfortunes which befall ourselves; and sometimes, perhaps, while our own sorrows are sustained with fortitude, we yield to an unbecoming grief for those whose happiness is very dear to us.

Indeed, an exemplary patience under the distresses of our friends is not the first of virtues. Yet it is very possible that a feeling mind may be betrayed into the indulgence of a more vehement sorrow, or a more careful anxiety, for others, than is



quite consistent with a spirit of filial resignation, from the generous nature of a sentiment which can be blameable only when it is excessive. The same principles, however, undoubtedly apply to the pains which we feel for others, and those which we suffer for ourselves; and the true Christian must endeavour, in both cases, to recollect by whom they are inflicted, and to cultivate that cheerful assurance of the paternal care and kindness of our heavenly Benefactor, which will reconcile us to every dispensation.

Submission to God, in its full extent, is by no means an act of simple obedience: it implies the union and exercise of many Christian graces. To submit, indeed, in the narrow sense of the word, is not a matter of choice to any of us. He who created heaven and earth by his word, and who wields the elements at his pleasure, will certainly not want the power to give effect to his own purposes. "As I live," saith the Lord, "every knee shall bow." Yet there is a submission, to which God invites his creatures as their privilege, while at the same time he requires it from them as their duty;—a submission not of the act only, but of the heart, founded upon the deepest conviction of his wisdom, an entire trust in his providence, and a fervent love of his goodness. Such a submission, it is plain, is essentially different from a mere acquiescence in events which we have no power to control. It is the homage of the will, the natural and beautiful expression of the best affections of the soul, of gra-

titude, of veneration, of filial love and filial confidence.

I believe it happens to most men who are truly pious, to become, as they advance in life, less and less disposed to enter upon complicated schemes for the attainment even of those objects which appear to be the most reasonably desirable. They have found themselves so often mistaken in their estimate of what is really good: they have seen the events to which they are chiefly indebted for their happiness in this life, brought about in a manner so original, by a course so unlike any they should themselves have pursued, and often so independently of their own efforts, that they grow distrustful of themselves, and are tired of weaving plots which a single cross accident is sufficient to entangle; or which, after having been completed with the utmost skill and care, unravel of themselves, and end in nothing. Now this is a practical acknowledgment of the reasonableness of that duty which we are now considering. If our experience convinces us that we neither understand well how to choose events nor how to control them, is it not manifestly our best wisdom to resign them willingly into the hands of Him who is certainly capable of directing them properly, and who has declared that "they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good?"

It seems, indeed, as if a wisdom far short of that which Christianity teaches would suffice to instruct us in the vanity of earthly schemes, and to lay the

foundation of a religious submission to God in the distrust of our own policy. Consider the most remarkable examples which history has recorded, of rare talents, and rare fortune, united for the accomplishment of some illustrious end. What are they, if read aright, but so many lessons of humility? Philip, the father of Alexander, was by far the most accomplished hero of his age. His birth was noble, his person graceful and dignified; his understanding of that rare class in which depth and facility are equally united, at once elegant and comprehensive, and embellished with all the learning that Greece in her best era could supply; his achievements in arms were great and brilliant, and his success was almost unvaried. It was Philip's chief ambition to live to future ages; and, that the triumph of his glory might be permanent, he was anxious to embody it in the literature and eloquence of Athens. For this end, he was content to pardon alike her insults and her injuries, and courted with unwearied assiduity the most considerable members of her commonwealth. But the eloquence of a single man defeated all his hopes. Demosthenes was his enemy; and that profligate demagogue has been able, by his matchless genius, to brand with unmerited infamy, during more than two thousand years, the illustrious prince who vanquished and spared him.

If the ancient world produced any person more deserving of admiration than Philip, perhaps it was his son. It was *his* ambition to found a mighty empire, which should embrace both the eastern and

western hemisphere, and foster, under one parent and protecting shade, the commerce, learning, arts, and legislation of the world. The greatness of his design could be measured only by the extensive genius which conceived it; and his success was equal to both. In the very prime of youth he overthrew the most potent kingdom of Asia; he selected the position and laid the foundations of a city, which for a thousand years drew into its bosom the wealth of three continents; he carried his victorious arms into the heart of India; and, having fixed and fortified his eastern frontier, returned to Babylon to prepare for extending his conquests in the west. There, as he was retiring early to rest, he passed by a chamber where some of his young officers and friends were banqueting, and in a thoughtless moment, for he was by habit very temperate, he accepted an invitation to join their carousals. The rest who does not know? In a few days he was laid in his grave; and in a few years, the great empire, of which he thought to have laid the foundations so deep that it should have stood for ages, was broken in pieces, and the fragments dispersed to the four winds of heaven.

I will mention but one example more, and that, like the two former, of the most vulgar notoriety. Cæsar desired to be master of the world. By the devotion of thirty years of his life to a single object, by the exercise of the most unrivalled talents, and the perpetration of unexampled crimes, he seemed to have effected his purpose. He was de-

clared dictator. And how long did he enjoy his elevation? The ability which had raised him so high failed him, when only a small portion of it was necessary to sustain him in his guilty eminence. He had fought his way to empire, at the head of legions who were devoted to him; and he had not the prudence to retain a mere body guard to preserve what he had won. He had sustained a character for moderation, during a long series of years, with consummate skill and hypocrisy; and when nothing but the language of moderation was possible or needful, he forgot to use it; and provoked a people who were jealous of the name of liberty, though they had surrendered the substance, by an avarice of silly titles. He had delivered himself repeatedly from the most complicated and overwhelming distresses, by his matchless sagacity and courage; and he was ruined at last by foolishly overlooking an irregular, ill-concerted conspiracy, which a child might have discovered. He had lived in the midst of a thousand dangers in the field, and he fell by the hands of assassins.

These instances, and numberless others, which are less striking only because they are less notorious, have been cited by the moralists of every age, and, after a few serious comments, dismissed with a sigh over the vanity of earthly glory. They prove, indeed, its vanity beyond controversy; but they prove, also, much more. They express, in large and striking characters, that hopeless uncertainty which attends upon every scheme of earthly policy.



What is true of great things is true of small. Private life has its Philips, and Alexanders, and Cæsars, without number, who are striving, with unwearied diligence, for the attainment of a commanding reputation, or brilliant establishments, or ascendancy of station. The mere moralist can do little more than condemn their folly, and weep over it. But the Christian may surely be taught, by such examples, a lesson of far higher wisdom; and, touched with a sense of his own weakness, may learn to resign himself, without regret and without fear, into the hands of his beneficent Creator.

The necessity of submission is, in the nature of things, proportional to the infirmities of those who are called on to submit. All agree, even they who are the least disposed to exalt the parental authority, that in early childhood implicit obedience must be exacted. Let the propriety of submission to God be measured, then, by the ignorance and corruption of man. Yet, how inconsistent are we! Few, perhaps, read the history of our first parents without feeling amazed at their folly, in forfeiting so great happiness for the pleasure of a single transgression. But what was their presumption compared with our own! Their understandings were not obscured by passions, warped by prejudices, or contracted by ignorance and neglect. We have derived from them a corrupt nature, and our faculties are so weak, that it is with difficulty we discover a few things immediately around us; yet we are fearless and confident as they, and ready continually to

hazard the same fatal experiment which they too boldly hazarded, and “brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

Submission is a considerable branch of true faith. It is the Apostle's charge against the unbelieving Jews, that “going about to establish their own righteousness, they had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” They thought they were perfectly instructed in the way of salvation. They confided in their own wisdom, and the wisdom of their scribes and doctors ; and they refused to come, as little children, to learn wisdom from those who were appointed of God to declare it. Thus it is with us in respect of the varying events of this life. They who, by the grace of God, have been instructed, from his word and their own experience, in the ceaseless providence of his government ; who fully believe that his eyes are over all, “running to and fro throughout the earth ;” are daily more and more disposed to resign into his hands all their ways, their dearest hopes and fondest wishes ; fully persuaded that his wisdom and loving kindness will never fail them ; and that he will find a way, even for the fulfilment of their earthly desires, if it be meet that they should be accomplished. Nor is it presumption to say, that an entire submission to the will of God, and a cheerful committal of all our concerns to the disposition of his good providence, is the course which true wisdom prescribes for the attainment of the best temporal blessings. “Humble yourselves under the mighty

hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time ; casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." " Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." " The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayer." Those, on the other hand, who though they may have a general belief in the promises of God, have not attained to that practical confidence which would enable them, with singleness of heart, to resign all things to his disposal, are apt to " go about to establish their good," much as the Jews did to establish their righteousness. They have too great confidence in their own wisdom ; and so do not, as heartily and entirely as they ought, " submit themselves" to the wisdom of God. And what must be the issue ? Their schemes, when most successful, want their best blessing ; and, if they fail, are without consolation. The error is, indeed, far less fatal than that of the unbelieving Jews, but it is scarcely less instructive.

This paper has insensibly grown to a considerable length ; and the patience of my readers may perhaps be exhausted, though the subject is not. It would, however, be unpardonable to conclude without saying something of the spiritual blessings which God has ordained to accompany true submission, and of the heavenly delight which attends it.

Trials and afflictions might well have been ap-

pointed, by our great Creator, merely as a test of our allegiance; more especially to fallen man, the fit subject of chastisement. But God, who is rich in mercy, whose peculiar attribute is to educe good out of evil, has not so ordained it. Our earthly parents may chasten us after their pleasure; but he “*for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.*”

How imperfectly do we estimate the true value of things! Did we rightly apprehend, or even duly consider, what it is to be “partakers of the holiness” of God, methinks it would be impossible for us to be sad, even in the midst of the bitterest afflictions. The privileges of a true Christian are, indeed, many. To know God, to trust in him, to love him; to have communion with the Father of Spirits; to come to him as pardoned and beloved children in Christ Jesus: these are high and heavenly blessings, in comparison of which, all that the world calls glory vanishes away and is lost. Yet there is still a higher privilege, a better blessing, the fruit and reward of suffering; “to be made partaker of his holiness.” This is the utmost point of exaltation: imagination can ascend no higher. If we may be partakers of the holiness of God, we shall undoubtedly be partakers also of his happiness; for holiness and happiness are one. Sin has separated the sister seraphs in this world; and while they roam around our vale of darkness, though, by a secret sympathy, continually tending to each other, some cloud still interposes to pre-

vent their perfect union. But in heaven they shall be for ever united, one in nature and one in beauty.

Let us, then, act as beings worthy of our high destiny. Having these promises, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." "For we have need of patience, that after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise." Now, "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion: and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

Lastly, consider the delight which accompanies a true resignation. God is not angry because he chastens us; or if angry, (alas, how many are our provocations!) his frowns are but the frowns of a



parent ; “ the graver countenance of love.” “ In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” The true Christian can look up to God in the midst of afflictions, as to a tender Father. Strengthened by his Spirit, convinced of his wisdom, deeply touched with a sense of his abundant and unmerited mercies, he can rejoice that he is permitted in any manner to contribute to advance the Glory of his God ; and can pray with his whole heart, that his “ will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” When faint with pain or sorrow, he remembers that the “ Captain of his salvation was made perfect through suffering.” To be made like him in affliction, is a sufficient honour in this world ; he shall be made like to him in glory and happiness in a better. For his Saviour’s sake, he is fully persuaded that, unworthy though he must be, the Father of light and life will vouchsafe to behold him with complacency ; and in this blessed assurance, he is enabled, amid all the strange accidents and changes of this life, to lift an eye of joy and confidence upwards, and follow gladly whithersoever the hand of Heaven shall lead him. Like the patriarch of old, he rejoices to go out, not knowing whither he is going. . It is enough for him that God is every where :

Safe in the hand of one disposing Power,  
Or in the natal or the mortal hour.

Nor is this all. If the highest earthly gratification

is to be found in pleasing those we love; if the humblest effort is delightful which can express an ardent and generous affection; can it be a mean satisfaction to testify, by filial docility and submission, that entire confidence, that heartfelt gratitude, and adoring love to our Almighty Father, which are the very elements that compose the temper and character of the true Christian? Holy and heavenly elements! which shall survive the lapse of ages, and triumph over the decays of nature. "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

## ON TRUST IN GOD.

1812.

THERE is a sonnet, in a collection of Italian poetry by Muratori, which struck me when I formerly read it, as eloquent and affecting. I do not recollect the words, and can give even the idea only imperfectly; but it is something of this sort: “Where shall I find a friend whose merits will never disappoint, and whose love will never forsake me? I have surveyed the world, and sought where my affections might repose: but some have forgotten me, some have proved faithless to my hopes, and some have been torn from me by death. Oh my Saviour, thou remainest always true, and for ever present with me!”

The complaint of the poet expresses, perhaps, a little of the character which often belongs to persons of a very quick sensibility: it betrays a delicacy rather too refined, and a tone of feeling naturally somewhat disposed to sadness. Yet his sorrows were probably real; and the sentiment he utters, though slightly shaded with melancholy, is just, noble, and affecting. Such is the imperfection of human characters, and such the uncertainty of earthly blessings, that few probably pass even

through a third part of life without witnessing the dissolution of some attachments which were once dear to them; and none certainly can advance to a mature age without being sensible of a pang still more severe in a long and awful separation from those they love. Yet, in all our disappointments and sorrows, one Friend is still near to us, whose kindness is ever most wakeful when we most need it; who can neither forsake us from levity, nor be snatched away from us by death.

It is indeed an unspeakable consolation, to every reflective and feeling mind, that amidst all the changes and chances, the disappointments and vanities around us, there is One who is permanent and perfect. The idea of that awful Being, who is the Father of the universe and the Centre of all excellence, is so congenial to the human mind, that even if it were impossible to prove his existence by reasonable inferences, I think we should be constrained to believe it from a necessity of finding something to sustain us under the sense of our weakness. For such a support, it is in vain that we look round upon each other. Every face is pale with the same fear; and the tongue of the wise, which should speak consolation, is faltering with the confession of its own helplessness. Take but God away, and the mighty vision around us is only a feverish dream;—a short, irregular, incomprehensible drama, of which man is at once the feeble actor and unmeaning spectator, “strutting his hour upon the stage,” and then vanishing for ever.

But God, of his great goodness, has not suffered us to wander about in darkness. He has taught us, by the works of his providence, and by the word of his Spirit, "that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Nor is this all. To know indeed this alone, would have been an unspeakable privilege and blessing: it is more than the wisest discerned clearly in ancient days. But to us, the chosen seed, adopted and beloved in the Redeemer, God has revealed himself, not merely as the Maker and Judge of the universe; nay, not simply as its general Guardian and Benefactor: He has taught us to regard him as a reconciled Father; a watchful, tender, and unfailing Friend. This is the character he has vouchsafed in mercy to assume; to this blessed relation he invites us; a relation of dignity unrivalled, of incomparable security, and ineffable happiness. He calls upon us to come to him with humble and thankful hearts; to place our whole confidence in him; to believe that he really loves us, and act as if we believed it; to accept, as freely as he offers it, the gift of everlasting life; and, casting away together our sins and our solicitude, to walk henceforth as children of a Parent who can never fail them,—“ heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

Surely I need not stop to qualify what has been said. The God of purity can be approached only by the pure; and though all are freely addressed, they only may presume to trust in God as their Father, who have first learned to trust in Christ as



their Saviour; who have laid down the burden of their sins before the cross; and received from their Redeemer, "into an honest and good heart," the Spirit of sanctification. But "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ" (which, though, like other rudiments, the foundation of all knowledge, we ought not to be for ever employed in laying afresh), let us employ a few moments in contemplating more nearly the duty which I have inscribed as a title to this paper—the duty of *trusting in God*.

Consider who it is that calls upon us to put our trust in him: "God, that made the earth, and all things that are therein." In what language shall I presume to speak of him! The most extraordinary genius of modern times never pronounced the awful name of God, without a pause. It is an idea which fills the mind at once, and which the highest natures will always contemplate with the profoundest reverence. As the most perfect optical instruments, enabling us to extend on every side the range of our vision, only discover new worlds and celestial wonders bursting upon our view in every direction through the illimitable regions of space; so when we contemplate the Deity, the most daring flight of imagination, the utmost comprehension of thought, instead of fathoming that mysterious and ineffable idea, are themselves lost in the survey of the unexhausted and inexhaustible riches that spread and multiply around them. To the dignity of such a subject no created being can possibly do justice. He is first, and last, and midst; "that is, and that

was, and that is to come." He formed all things by his word; he sustains and permeates the whole creation. Nothing is too vast for the control of his dominion; nothing too little for the vigilance of his inspection. Let us endeavour to conceive whatever is supreme in power, comprehensive in wisdom, perfect in purity, and enchanting in goodness, and we shall present to ourselves, not indeed a living picture of the Deity, (for how could we support its lustre!) but a faint and shaded image of him, such as our mortal vision may bear to contemplate, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him!"

It is worthy of remark, and perhaps no mean argument of the truth of revelation, that of all the varied systems of religion which have prevailed in the world, the Jewish and Christian is that which has alone presented the one supreme God, as the proper and direct object of worship, with any distinctness to the minds of its votaries. Paganism peopled every vale and mountain, every stream and forest, the air, the earth, and the ocean, with tutelary intelligences; but the great First Cause was unknown to the creeds of popular superstition, and was sought only in the schools of the philosophers. In the Indian mythology (which indeed was the same in its origin), a like peculiarity is observable. The Supreme Being is never presented to the vulgar eye. Some more thoughtful disciple of Vyasa, in the shades of Benares, may inquire into his nature, and adore him in secret; but the poor Hindoo is

content to pay his homage to Surya, or Ganga, or Mariataly, or some other of the numberless spiritual agents who preside over the objects of nature and classes of society, with limited powers and local jurisdictions. The like tendency of human nature to retire from the contemplation of a Being too great to be understood by the careless, and too excellent to be loved by the sinful, has been manifest during many periods of the popish superstition, and remains still visible in some dark corners of its dominions. The whole host of canonized saints and martyrs owe their idolatrous pre-eminence to the same principle which planted Minerva at Syracuse, Diana at Ephesus, and Jupiter in the Capitol. Their jurisdiction too, like the deities of old, extends only over a limited class of worshippers. Santa Rosalia is in high honour at Palermo; but Santa Maria would be justly jealous, if she claimed any authority at Trapani. The patron saint of Catania has often arrested the fiery streams which burst from the sides of Ætna, but she works no miracles at Syracuse.

I cannot help observing also, that those bolder geniuses, who of late years have rejected Christianity as a dispensation unworthy of the wisdom and equity of God, have by no means done credit to their own *more rational and simple* scheme of religion, by sublimer delineations of the character of the Almighty, or the expression of a profounder reverence towards him. Mr. Hume's language, in those parts of his Essays where he touches on the attributes of God, is very highly presumptuous; and his private

correspondence was profané. Voltaire, a sincere Theist, in one of his lighter works, speaks of the moral government of the Deity in terms of the most insolent and offensive levity; and so little tendency had his speculations to produce an increased veneration towards the Author of all things, that neither his reproaches nor his authority were sufficient to prevent some of the most illustrious of his pupils from pushing his principles to the direct disavowal of a First Cause. Both Diderot and Condorcet were atheists. The former, in one of his letters, says, “Ce pauvre Voltaire radote un peu. Il avouait l’autre jour qu’il croyait a l’être de Dieu.” D’Alembert laboured pretty generally under the same imputation; but La Harpe says in his letters, that he had frequently heard him (D’Alembert) say, “que la probabilité était pour le Théisme.” *La probabilité!*—and is this all that a man possessed of so fine and profound a genius could discover of that August Being to whose bounty he owed the enjoyment of all his distinguished faculties?

Oh, star-eyed Science! has thou wandered there,  
To waft us home the lesson of despair?

It is impossible not to be struck at the vast superiority which the simplest among the faithful followers of Christ possesses, upon these subjects, over the greatest masters of modern wisdom. The utmost that D’Alembert could discover, or would consent to believe, was, that the presumption is in favour of the existence of a Deity. The true

Christian, however little enlightened by secular science, has learned not only to clothe the idea of God with every attribute of intellectual and moral greatness, but he even presumes, without fear, to draw down and appropriate, as it were, to himself, the blessed object of his homage ; to believe, that He, who fills the universe with his majesty, disdains not to visit the abode of the meanest of his servants, to watch over him with paternal affection and solicitude, to listen to all his prayers, to regard his humblest wishes, to be present to the most secret sorrows and anxieties of his bosom : “ He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways.” I will not say whether the creed of the disciple of Christ, or the disciple of Voltaire, be the most philosophical ; but I know which is the most sublime and most consoling.

God invites us to put our trust in him. And is he not trustworthy ? The ordinary blessings of life are apt to escape our notice ; but our heavenly Father undoubtedly intended them as assurances of his unfailing providence. We can imagine, indeed, a state of existence, of such a nature, that the whole series of circumstances and events should appear to be the mechanical results of some one original impulse. Or we may suppose a world so constituted, that every thing should be manifestly directed by man, as the efficient agent ; in which his activity and foresight would be the final causes of all visible things. Under such economies, it might perhaps be pardonable for us to think of the Deity (like the



old Epicureans) as the spectator, rather than as the governor of the universe; to acknowledge his general authority, without much regarding his providence. But these are the dreams of fancy, not the realities of nature. The world in which we live is so constituted, that every thing seems to proclaim aloud the perpetual presence of the Almighty. The free-agency of man (that is, his real, and not merely necessary or nominal agency), though a matter of instinctive and indestructible belief to every one of us, is, in argument, far more difficult of proof than the constant and efficient providence of God. There is not a single phenomenon of thought or perception, respecting which, when correctly analysed, we are not compelled to confess, that we can render no account of it, except, that such is the will of our Creator. The history of all physical science is precisely the same. Gravitation, which has assisted us to explain so many of the celestial phenomena, is only a law or tendency, apparent in visible things, of which we can prove the existence, but have discovered nothing more. The chemical properties of bodies are merely appearances, which we may perfectly understand as facts, but which the most skilful examination can only enable us to resolve into other more general appearances; leaving us, with respect to causation, in the same obscurity. Every science has its ultimate principles, and every ultimate principle brings us at once to God. Nor are the lights of philosophy at all necessary for the discovery of this truth. Like the elements of light

and heat, it impresses itself on the feelings of the simple, while it speaks to the understandings of the learned. It is the language of every thing within us and around us. The organization of our bodies is so wonderfully delicate, the ramifications of the vascular and nervous systems are so amazingly fine, and interwoven with such intricacy, that it is difficult to conceive how we could be kept alive for a single hour, without the preserving power of our Creator unceasingly exercised upon us. And what is the ordinary course of our conduct and experience, but one continued testimony to the watchful providence of God? We lie down upon our beds at the close of day, and consign ourselves, without the slightest solicitude, to a state of passive inefficiency for many hours, well assured that we shall awake on the ensuing morning with every function of life restored and refreshed. We commit the seed to the earth, in full assurance, that after a few weeks, it will spring up in a new form, and that "our valleys will stand thick with corn." Day by day we are clothed and fed, though our hands have neither wrought in the loom nor wielded the sickle. It is idle to speak of this as effected by the mechanism of society; it is provided by the economy of God, who has formed us so wonderfully, and so regularly operates on the faculties and feelings he has given, that every one is secure of finding the supply of his wants in the knowledge and industry of his neighbour. It is difficult to conceive a spectacle more striking than that which is exhibited every day in a

great nation ; where ten, or twenty, or thirty millions of beings, not one of whom can support life without a regular supply of food, retire calmly to rest at night, in a perfect confidence that they shall find a supply for their wants on the following day. Need I add to these general proofs of the superintending care and vigilance of God, those personal experiences, which all of us, I am persuaded, possess of his particular providence ? These indeed are less fitted for argument than the public demonstrations of his agency ; but I appeal to all who have watched the events of their lives with any diligence, whether they have not frequently been of a nature to produce *upon their own minds* a powerful and reasonable conviction, that the Almighty does not behold them with indifference ; that he neither forgets their iniquities nor despises their sufferings ; but mingles mercy with judgment, and vindicates his goodness in both.

If then, we are persuaded, (as surely we must be,) that God is both infinite in excellence and highly deserving of our confidence, let us consider what it is to put our trust in him. The true nature of a thing may generally be best understood by contemplating its most perfect specimen. Trust in God was exhibited in its utmost possible perfection when Christ hung upon the cross for man. He could have called down legions of angels, but he knew what was the will of his Father, and “ he committed himself to him who judgeth righteously.” His strength and spirits sank under his sufferings ; the

powers of darkness were triumphant; the shades of death gathered fast around him; his God had forsaken him; yet the last accent that faltered on his lips avowed his full conviction that the arm of the Lord was not shortened, nor the empire of righteousness subverted. It is the peculiar character of a lively trust in God, that "against hope it believeth in hope." When all is cheerful around, and health and friends and fortune unite to shower their bounties on us, there is little danger of falling into an anxious, desponding temper. But health is not always firm, friends are not ever present, and fortune is exceedingly fickle. Perhaps some little distress first overtakes us; vexations and disappointments follow; a diminution of fortune succeeds; sorrows thicken fast upon us; the strong wall, that seemed to fence in our blessings so securely, is almost levelled: and calamities roll in, wave after wave, till we are ready to perish. How is it with us now? Can we still repose on the watchful providence of God, and trust in his mercy? Let us remember, that these are the seasons in which the character is to be strengthened, and the sincerity of our professions established. Can we say that we love God, when the flame of our affection is ready to expire with the first gust of misfortune? Do we pretend that we put our whole trust in him, and yet despair of his mercy, and almost deny his providence, though nothing in the whole world is altered but our condition? It is alike the office of reason and of faith to correct the delusions of our senses, to



place things before us in their true proportions, and prevent our being deceived by mere appearances. A firm trust in the wisdom and beneficence of God is at once the evidence and exercise of both.

But the duty of trusting in God is not limited to the seasons of distress. Then, indeed, it is the most severely tried; and in proportion to the severity of the trial it is invigorated. But the general uncertainty of human concerns requires an internal principal of strength that is equally extensive; the constant care and kindness of our Maker demand the return of an unceasing confidence. Trust in God will produce in every period, and under all the varied circumstances of life, a settled preference of spiritual things over those which are temporal. Suppose any conceivable temptation: the question always is, Do you dare to rely upon the faithfulness of your Maker; to renounce the pleasure, to support the suffering, from a rational regard to his will; to “endure, as seeing him who is invisible?” Let it not be imagined that the seasons in which this duty is to be exercised recur only at intervals; they are daily and hourly. You are poor, perhaps, and some sad child of affliction comes to plead for your compassion: trust in God, and be bountiful. You are engaged in business, and others, less scrupulous than you, are advancing before you: trust in God, and be just. You are so peculiarly situated, that a slight prevarication or improper concealment would greatly favour your interests, and enable you to prevent serious uneasiness to yourself or others: trust



in God, and be sincere. Whoever will honestly attend to all the various occasions in which he is called upon to testify his confidence in God, by acting in contradiction to present appearances, will assuredly discover that this principle, though its utmost energies are developed only under the pressure of great calamities, communicates its influence to the minutest concerns; insinuating itself insensibly, where the Christian character is matured, into the whole system of life; and, like the element we breathe, imparting purity and vigour wherever it prevails, though itself, perhaps, unseen by those whom it refreshes.

It is natural for those whose hearts are deeply penetrated with a sense of the beneficence of their Maker, to inquire with some solicitude how they may offer to him an acceptable service; what are the actions, what the dispositions, which he will consider as more peculiarly consecrated to his glory. Certainly, among the many motives which recommend the duty of putting our trust in God, the consideration best fitted to affect a grateful and generous spirit is, that it is a homage peculiarly pleasing to his Creator. It may even be said, without presumption, that it is a tribute in some measure worthy of him. We have confidence in those we love. We have confidence in those whom we highly esteem and venerate. To trust in God, is to declare practically, (and this is a very different matter from the mere profession,) that we believe him to be such as he really is, all-powerful, of un-

failing wisdom and faithfulness, abundant in mercy and loving kindness. This is an acknowledgment which in the nature of things *must* be acceptable. It is a service not of the lips, but of the heart. It is an avowal in the sight of the universe, that "this God is our God." It is a solemn and effective recognition of his authority, and of our entire resignation to it. What parent is not gratified to find, that in the midst of apparent severity or neglect, his child has ever placed an entire reliance on his affection? Who does not feel his heart glow with gratitude towards those who have loved him in absence and silence, and with perhaps the appearances of alienation on his part? When Alexander gave into the hands of his friend and physician the paper which accused him of perfidy, and in the same instant swallowed the medicine which he was informed would be fatal, what words can do justice to the feelings of both? We are not presumptuous in thus transferring the ideas which are attached to the most intimate relations in this life to spiritual concerns; because, when God vouchsafed to assume the characters under which he has revealed himself to us in holy writ, he certainly intended not merely to instruct us in our duties towards him, but to animate and console us by the communication of his sentiments and dispositions towards us. And conformably to these views, we find, that of the many celebrated actions of holy men which have been handed down to us, none are marked with stronger testimonies of the approbation of God,

than those which indicated a very lively confidence in him. Such was Abraham's departure from his native land, and that solemn act of faith by which he offered up his only begotten son. Such was the cheerful courage of Caleb and Joshua, when the body of the Israelites refused to march into the land of Canaan. Such was "the holy enthusiasm of young David," when he fought and slew the champion of the Philistines. Such was the pious humility of Hezekiah, when he committed to God the protection of his people against the overwhelming forces of the Assyrians. "Now these things were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."

It seems a sort of injustice to the subject, after urging the motives for putting our trust in God which have been last mentioned, to speak of the benefits which will result to ourselves. God, however, who knows his creatures and desires their happiness, has multiplied the inducements to his service, so that no reasonable or virtuous principle of action in the heart of man may be left unaddressed. Indeed, the rewards which he proposes to Christians, are of so spiritual a nature, that while, contemplated in one aspect, they appear fitted to operate upon that sense of interest and rational desire of happiness which belongs to every living creature, in another character they address the feelings of the heart in a language of the most persuasive eloquence. The blessings which Revelation offers, are ever of a nature to bring us nearer to God, the source and

consummation of them all. This great principle, which breathes through the whole of religion, is visible in that portion of it which we are now considering.

I know not, indeed, that any words can more beautifully describe the blessedness of trusting in God, than those of the twenty-third Psalm; "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." What cheerfulness, what courage, what peace, what holy gratitude and heavenly piety, breathe through this noble composition! These are the rewards of placing our confidence in God; and, however our timid hearts and wavering intellects may deceive us, these are the true and everlasting sources of happiness. These are the riches with which no stranger intermeddles. "The kingdom of God is within you." In this land of shadows visible things are continually pressing upon the senses, and a careless unreflecting world pays them a ready homage. We admire

wealth; we value highly the estimation of our neighbours; we are vain of hereditary honours; we pant for political renown. Poverty and unimportance in society are dreaded, as the last of evils. We are frightened at phantoms, and grasp at baubles. But, whoever will set himself to read the word of God diligently, and with honesty and courage contemplate the real nature of things, will be convinced that no external good can constitute the proper happiness of a being such as man. Born for immortality, and endowed with an intellectual and moral nature, his true felicity must certainly be sought in those things which are permanent as himself; in whatever may furnish a fit and noble employment for his faculties, or awaken his feelings to emotions of generosity and affection. Thanks be to God, this world, with all its imperfections, supplies abundantly occasions for both. But God is himself the highest object to which the soul in all its powers can be directed. None ever trusted in him, without increasing in spiritual strength. None ever trusted in him without discovering more and more of the plans of his providence, and of the depth of his unsearchable wisdom. None ever trusted in him, without tasting largely of his bounty. To trust in God, in its more advanced state, is to have the image of his perfection ever before us; to live in his continual presence, encircled, as it were, by the visible forms of his majesty and goodness. What words can adequately



pourtray the dignity of such a condition; the tranquillity it communicates, the courage it inspires, the joy, and gratitude, and holy affections, it breathes through the soul! "Oh! taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

## ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

1812.

IF the concurring experience of all ages has established any fact respecting our common nature more certainly than another, perhaps it is this, that when we desire to induce men to make considerable efforts for the attainment of an object, it is wise to engage their feelings, as well as to convince their judgment. The principle is so familiar to us, that a writer would be thought to trifle with our understandings who should employ any elaborate reasoning to establish or enforce it. Yet it is most certain that a truth, universally received and acted upon in all the common affairs of life, has been beheld with suspicion, and even absolutely rejected by many, when applied to our religious concerns; and the only object of pursuit which can worthily engross all the thoughts and desires and energies of an immortal being, it is imagined may be best secured by suspending the most active principle of his nature.

Indeed it is exceedingly remarkable how different is the wisdom of man and the wisdom of his Creator. God has told us that we are fallen, depraved, unworthy beings; and has made the knowledge and

confession of this truth the very basis of true religion. But men say, to persuade people that they are wicked is the sure way to make them become so: teach them first to respect themselves, and they will soon feel a pride in being truly respectable. Christ has said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind, and all thy strength; this is the first and great commandment." Men call the religious exercise of the affections enthusiasm and mysticism; and contend strenuously, that it becomes us to offer to our Maker a reasonable service.

Here, indeed, we are at last agreed. We, too, are desirous to offer to our Maker a *reasonable* service; a service such as his perfections call for, and the nature which he has given us may fitly render. Is it not, then, in the highest degree reasonable to admire and adore Him who is unspeakably excellent;—to overflow with gratitude to Him who has blessed us in prosperity, and comforts us in sorrow; who has given us life and all its enjoyments; who has abounded continually towards us in all long suffering and goodness;—to love Him with our whole hearts, who loved us when we were enemies, and has redeemed us to himself even by the blood of his dear Son! If it be reasonable to experience the most unmerited mercies without being affected by them; to receive blessings innumerable without a single emotion of thankfulness; and to contemplate perfect goodness with as much indifference as if it were an abstract theorem; then, indeed, the

service of the affections is irrational. But if our very instincts tell us, that such a supposition is absurd and abominable; if the basest nature can scarcely endure, and the noblest abhors it; we have little reason to fear, that in yielding the whole heart to God we can be justly chargeable with weakness or folly: for how can He attract towards himself any of our affections, without commanding them all; or with the least colour of equity possess the faintest influence upon our hearts, without reigning triumphant in them?

It is a noble saying of Cicero, in the person of one of his philosophical disputants\*; *Pietas est justitia erga Deos*; "Piety is justice towards God." If our moral obligations grow out of the condition in which we are placed, surely it is abundantly manifest, that to the highest relation must belong the highest duties; that He who has given us every thing we possess, must be entitled to whatever return he will deem acceptable. Those then are greatly in error, who think that usefulness and benevolence towards our fellow creatures form the sum of morality; unless they can prove, what no man certainly is able to prove, that these constitute the only service which can worthily be rendered to our Creator; and I have always thought the modern theory of expediency chiefly objectionable, because it presents the system of social relations so continually, and (to every practical purpose) so exclusively to our attention, that they occupy the whole

\* De Naturâ Deorum.

sphere of vision. In the darkness of paganism, indeed, it might be possible to doubt whether a being so sinful and unworthy as man, should presume to approach his Maker with the incense of gratitude and love. But God has himself dispersed that night of shame and bondage. He has called us of his free mercy to the adoption of children in Christ Jesus. What the wisest and best of the heathen world saw darkly and hoped faintly, He has fully revealed and distinctly commanded. He invites, He requires us to love him; and this blessed precept, though in the form of an injunction, is, in truth, at once the surest pledge of his reconciliation, the most powerful inducement to holiness, and the consummation of all felicity.

The love of God, whatever difficulties may sometimes have been raised respecting it, is surely to an honest heart exceedingly easy of comprehension. It is a natural affection in its highest exercise, and directed towards its noblest object. The human soul is capable indeed of entertaining many sacred feelings. We reverence the majesty of God; we admire his perfections; we are grateful for his mercies; we have confidence in his goodness. These all are doubtless excellent, and highly acceptable to our Maker. But love is yet more elevated and more perfect. Every other religious sentiment seems but to prepare and lead us up to this. Every other religious sentiment is comprehended in it. It is, therefore, with great justness that the Apostle pronounces love to be "the fulfilling of the law." In



its exercise towards God, it embraces every devout affection : as, in exercise towards man, it fills the circle of the social duties.

The love which we owe to our Redeemer seems (so far as it is possible for us to have accurate notions on such a subject,) to be exactly the same with the love which we owe to God. It is difficult even to separate the idea, though the adorable Persons to whom it is directed are, for purposes the most wise and gracious, presented to us separately in Holy Writ. Whatever is true of either is true of both. The work of redemption was the work of God in Christ; and Christ is "over all, God blessed for ever." The identity which the Scriptures attribute to God and Christ, both in perfection of nature and the exercise of goodness towards us, is so complete, that the love which that perfection and goodness awaken seems, in like manuer, scarcely capable of division. So that we seem to be justified in saying, that we must love God with all our hearts, and Christ with all our hearts; that we must love God above all things, and Christ above all things. The metaphysical embarrassment, indeed, is great, but there is no practical difficulty. However, though it seemed needful to touch upon this point, it becomes us all to think and speak upon it with a modesty suitable to the dignity of the subject and our exceeding weakness.

Love is one of the simple affections of our nature, and as such, necessarily incapable of definition. But God, who knows our blindness, and

how ready we are to deceive ourselves, even where the deception leads directly to our ruin, has most wisely provided that the truth of those feelings, which we profess to cherish towards him, shall be realized by the evidence of our actions. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me, he will keep my words." "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." These, and similar declarations, are nothing more than authoritative assertions of a fact in itself most incontestible, and constantly assumed in our intercourse with each other. Who does not smile at professions of friendship which evaporate in empty words? Who does not know instinctively, that it is in the nature of a strong affection to take possession of the man, and be visible in the general tenor of his actions? Would any one think it necessary to believe the most solemn asseverations of attachment which should lead to no practical consequences? God has established exactly the same test of our devotion to him, which we all habitually apply towards each other. And most wisely and graciously is it established; for if the love of him be necessary to our happiness, have we not great reason to be thankful, that the criteria of its reality which He has chosen are such, that even the blindness and carelessness of man can scarcely mistake them? But though the love of God, wherever it exists, will unquestionably be visible in the fruits of holiness, these fruits, it must be remembered, are only its

attendants. Thoughts and actions are proofs of our existence, but they are not existence. And this distinction, though it may seem abstract, is of great practical importance; for man is so little disposed to love a being of perfect purity, that there is a strong disposition in our nature to evade the first and great commandment, under the notion of complying with it by general obedience. It is not necessary to investigate this error. God has called upon us to *love* him. He demands our hearts, without reserve, without equivocation. It is at our peril if we refuse. And oh! what insanity is it to endeavour to escape, by the subtilties of a false casuistry, from that blessed precept which bears with it our highest glory and happiness!

The evidence of love is in *all* the fruits of holiness. Yet there seems to be one quality or temper of mind, which is pointed out, both by the language of the Scriptures, and by the constitution of things, as more peculiarly and inseparably attached to it,—spiritual-mindedness; a sister grace of the same blessed family, and hastening to her everlasting home. “Set your affection on things above;”—“for where your treasure is,” said our heavenly Master, “there will your heart be also.” “Our conversation is in heaven,” said the Apostle, “from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus.” The same truth is plainly and awfully implied in the following passages: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is

not in him." "No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The love of God, where it is sincere, carries the mind above the little vanities of this world. It familiarises the soul with objects so noble, it infuses into it desires so elevated, it fills it with pleasures so pure and heavenly, that it is impossible to be detained any longer with the poor importunate cares and wishes that occasion so continual a bustle among mankind; or to regard, without a sort of contempt mingled with compassion, that childish eagerness with which wealth and honours, and all the gilded baubles of this life are pursued by so many. Wherever these things, and such as these, are in high estimation, we may be quite certain "the love of the Father" is not. The lamps which cheered our darkness fade at the approach of the rising sun. The pursuits which delighted our ignorance are understood and despised when we attain to "the knowledge of the glory of God in the faith of Jesus Christ."

I cannot but observe here, and it can scarcely be considered as a digression from the subject, how wisely it has been ordained of God, that actions, rather than sentiments, shall be the proofs of our allegiance to him. Whoever is at all acquainted with the speculations of philosophical writers respecting the will, must be aware that no man can with propriety be said to desire or will any thing, which lies within the reach of his own powers, unless he so prefers that he really endeavours to obtain it. For

the will is governed by motives ; and if a man says, he desires to do one thing, while he actually does another, it is plain that he speaks inaccurately : his preferring the second is a proof that he does not, in any strictness of expression, desire the first. If a man says, his earnest desire is to be virtuous, while he continues to live on in sin, it is plain he deceives himself ; for (through God's assistance, freely offered to all,) he might be virtuous if he would, that is, if he really desired so to be ; and the truth is, he does not desire it : though, if he could be virtuous, and still continue to enjoy the pleasures of sin, he probably would desire it. Yet we hear men talk of a thousand wishes, which they think real, though, in truth, they exist only in their imaginations ; and there can be no doubt that many bad men take great comfort to themselves from their supposed desires to be good. Now God, who knows what is in man, could not but know (I speak with reverence,) that if the sentiments and dispositions of the heart were made the test of holiness, men would deceive themselves respecting these, just as we find they do respecting their wishes ; that they would fancy they loved God, while they really loved the world ; and imagine they loved their fellow-creatures, while they really loved themselves. For contrary affections are just as incompatible, and, in strictness of language, as absurd, as contrary desires. God, therefore, has declared, that actions shall be the test of our sentiments, exactly as they are of our wishes. And this is the more observable, because the dis-



positions of the heart, and not external actions, evidently furnish the qualifications for heaven and happiness; so that it might have been supposed, (with apparent reason,) that a revelation from God would enjoin only the attainment of certain tempers of mind, as the proper conditions of our acceptance. We see, however, that a different test has been established; and surely it is no mean proof of the truth of Christianity, that the most accurate researches into the constitution of man enable us to verify its wisdom.

The commands of God will always be found to be perfective of the nature which He has given us, not contradictory to it. Having enjoined us to love him, we may be well persuaded that he has revealed himself to us in a manner fitted to awaken that affection. The sources, indeed, from which it flows, are of the same kind when directed towards God, as we feel them to be when exercised towards any of our fellow-creatures;—the knowledge of his goodness, and our own personal experience of it.

That moral excellence is the proper object of love has not been denied, I believe, by any writer; and I suppose it is not necessary to establish, by argument, a fact which has never been disputed.

But there have not been wanting writers, justly celebrated for wisdom and piety, who insist that the *only* proper and worthy source of love to our Maker, is to be found in a knowledge of his perfections. This opinion, when accurately examined, is not so entirely indefensible as at first it appears

to be ; for the sense which we have of the goodness of God towards us may, perhaps, without any great impropriety, be said to awaken our love to him chiefly by giving us a more near or lively view of his perfections. I confess, however, that the distinction has already seemed to me far too refined to be of any practical value ; and even, unless very cautiously received, to be opposed to the general languages of Scripture. When St. John says “ We love him because he first loved us,” can the sense of the Apostle be reasonably doubted ? Surely in this place the most obvious meaning is the right one. Yet Mr. Edwards, in his work upon the Religious Affections, endeavours to give it a different construction ; and Mrs. Hutchinson, in a manuscript which is extant, explains it entirely in a Calvinistic sense. But consider ;—Gratitude is a moral feeling ; gratitude is a natural and proper return for bounties received. Now it is doubtless very possible to feel grateful towards those whom we do not love. But suppose us to experience kindness from one who is already dear to us : I appeal to every generous and feeling heart, whether the sentiment of gratitude, which we should cherish towards an indifferent person, is not now swallowed up and lost in the ardour of an increased affection. It is impossible for the most penetrating eye to distinguish between them. When St. Paul says, “ The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead,” he seems plainly to urge the greatness of the benefit bestowed

as operating irresistibly on his affections. So in the Old Testament, we find the Almighty continually calling on his people to remember his mercies towards them, and charging them with the plainest guilt for their insensibility. It is one of the most striking and characteristic features of Revelation, that instead of enjoining us to love a Being of abstract perfection, it has<sup>d</sup> laid open to us the whole of that astonishing and intimate system of relations, which connects man so closely with his Maker, under the Christian economy; for the very purpose (as it should seem) of affecting us with the view of his peculiar condescension and rich mercy towards us. Yet our interest in these things is just as personal as it can be in the most direct interposition for our happiness. Surely we do a dangerous violence to common sense, and to the universal feelings of mankind, in denying that love to God arises in part from a personal experience of his goodness.

A correct knowledge of the true fountains from whence our affections spring, is of great practical value in religion. We are thus enabled to distinguish whatever is rational and truly excellent, from those transports of fancy which sometimes assume to themselves titles to which they have no claim. We are enabled also, by well-directed exertions, to keep alive, strengthen, and elevate the holy dispositions, which, through the Divine goodness, have been engrafted in our hearts. The love of God is no mysterious sentiment inspired into the soul we know not how, and sustained and invigorated solely

by supernatural influences. Like every thing else within us and around us, it is, indeed, most truly, the gift of our heavenly Father; but it differs not, in any essential quality, from the other graces which his Spirit imparts; and it is for us, earnestly soliciting and humbly depending on his assistance, to cultivate diligently those means by which it may be cherished and increased.

If the contemplation of the goodness of God be the first natural cause of our love towards him, that love, it is manifest, will be proportionate to our acquaintance with his perfections. Let us, then, endeavour to improve in our knowledge of God. His moral excellence is indeed the proper object of affection; but we cannot consider it separately from his other attributes. They are all either subservient to, or identified with it. They all contribute to fill up and perfect the great and inexpressible idea of Deity. Nor let us imagine that this knowledge is too high for us. Every page of Holy Writ invites us: the voice of the whole creation calls us to pursue it. Has the everlasting God raised us from the dust, and breathed into us the breath of life; has He furnished us with faculties to apprehend, to imagine, to reason; has He made us "beings of large discourse, looking before and after," curious to know, and intelligent to discover; has He set us in the midst of a theatre of wonders, building up the bright canopy of the heavens above, and spreading out the green earth beneath us; has He so finely constructed, so delicately wrought the frame which

we inhabit, that every sense shall drink in rapture and amazement;—and can we enjoy the gifts, yet forget the Giver; and while we stretch our researches through the varied provinces of nature, neglect Him who made and sustains them all? What is the whole tenor of Scripture, but a history of the character of God manifested in his dealings towards us? It is that awful and perfect character, equally wise and holy, equally elevated and amiable, which the highest spiritual intelligences esteem it their glory to contemplate. What language can express our folly, if we refuse to share so blessed a privilege!

But it is not necessary to enter very largely upon a topic which is enforced by the explicit testimony of Holy Writ. “This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” These are the words of our ever-blessed Redeemer. Hear also St. Paul: “Wherefore I also cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all



judgment." "For this cause we also do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." What the Apostle prayed for earnestly, we ought to desire fervently; and what we fervently desire, we shall strenuously endeavour to obtain.

The love of God has its foundation in our personal experience of his goodness, as well as in the knowledge of his perfections. Let us then so attend to and consider the mercies we receive, that we may grow daily more and more sensible to the bounty of him who bestows them. This is an exercise in which the more eminent saints appear, in all ages, peculiarly to have delighted. Indeed I know not any disposition which more decisively marks a truly Christian frame of mind, than a lively sensibility to the exceeding bounty of God in all his hourly and ordinary mercies, as well as in the more special instances of his providential care and

kindness. Worldly persons seem to have little sense of the magnitude of the blessings they enjoy. They go on thoughtlessly and thanklessly wasting all the bounties of Providence; and, if but a few drops of bitterness are shed into the cup of their pleasures, are apt to think themselves hardly dealt with. But whoever has learned his religion at the feet of Christ Jesus; whoever has deeply felt the majesty of God and his own meanness; whoever has been duly humbled under a sense of his many and most grievous offences, his abuse of the mercies he has largely shared, his frequent forgetfulness of his best Benefactor, the faint and worthless service of his least sinful days;—whoever, in short, has just notions of himself, and sees things as they really are; will be deeply penetrated with the condescension, the long-suffering, and the goodness of that adorable Being, who has bestowed upon him every thing he possesses, all he has, and all he hopes for. And if he has sinned wilfully against his Creator, (as alas! which of us has not?) and if he has suffered chastisement for his offences (“of which all are partakers”), how will his heart glow with gratitude towards the gracious Father who loved him even when he was most unworthy, and visited him with timely afflictions, lest he should perish for ever! Could the veil which now separates us from futurity be for a moment drawn aside, and those regions of everlasting happiness and sorrow, which strike so faintly on the imagination, be presented fully to our eyes; it would occasion, I doubt not, a sudden and strange

revolution in our estimate of things. Many are the distresses for which we now weep in suffering or sympathy, that would awaken us to songs of thanksgiving:—Many the dispensations which now seem dreary and inexplicable, that would fill our adoring hearts with astonishment and joy.

But though it is highly desirable that we should attend diligently to God's dealings with us, and acquire a very lively sensibility to every instance of his goodness; it is, at the same time, important, that this personal wakefulness be accompanied with an habitual regard to the general character of his providence: otherwise it may happen, that the pressure of temporary affliction may shake the very foundations of our faith. A settled conviction, founded upon rational evidence, of the beneficence of our Creator, is the key-stone of all religion. This blessed persuasion, increasing with an increasing knowledge of the nature of his government, is the first source of Divine love. More strictly rational than the second, yet abounding less in ardour and animation, it gives in stability what it borrows in feeling. A love of God founded only on the perception of his excellence would move our hearts but faintly; flowing only from a grateful sense of his goodness to ourselves, it might be fluctuating and fitful. Both therefore must be united; and a more beautiful instance can hardly be imagined of the harmony with which the different principles of our nature concur in the service our Maker. It affords an example,

too, which is highly characteristic, of the way in which God has ordained that our faculties and feelings shall act together to build up the perfect Christian.

The seeds of holiness are sown in this life, but they grow up and flourish for eternity. It is impossible to contemplate the two great sources of our love to God, without perceiving that, as each is in its nature capable of increasing without limits, the sentiment to which they give birth must be, in like manner, infinite. God is unchangeable; but our idea of his perfections is capable of perpetual enlargement, and his promises assure us of an unceasing accumulation of benefits. Here, indeed, our views are faint, and our affections languid; yet even in this life we are gradually maturing for heaven, and travelling towards that kingdom where the tabernacle of God is planted. In proportion as our natures are renewed and sanctified, we feel a growing complacency in contemplating the adorable image of our Maker, and receive his increasing mercies with still increasing sensibility. And when this "earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved," and we shall rise in the likeness of our Redeemer, holy and incorruptible, will the love that cheered our pilgrimage below fail us in those celestial regions? When we stand before the throne of God and of the Lamb, every faculty vigorous, and every feeling awake to rapture; when the mysterious volume of Providence shall be unrolled, and

the wisdom and goodness of the great Father of all things fully vindicated ; when the recollection of the past, the perception of the present, and the anticipation of the future, shall unite to overwhelm us with joy and wonder ; when we shall behold our Saviour “ face to face,” and “ know even as we are known ; then will love be indeed triumphant, immeasurable as the perfections of our Maker, and inexhaustible as his bounties.

Love is the great principle of the *Gospel* ; but it has been the first commandment under both dispensations. The Law was published, indeed, in thunders from Mount Sinai, and the punishments it denounced were the sanctions which enforced its precepts. Yet even then “ God left not himself without witness ;” the love of him was enjoined with the most affecting solemnity ; and when our Redeemer republished that Divine precept, He borrowed it from the Pentateuch. This concurs with every natural indication to shew that, whatever other principles of action may be useful to a being so ignorant and infirm as man, love is the true end of all religion. Our advancement in holiness may be safely measured by the growing influence of this affection ; and it is the peculiar glory of Christianity, that, by opening to us the great doctrine of reconciliation through a Saviour, and introducing with that doctrine a service more rational and more spiritual than belonged to the former covenant, it has given to this heavenly prin-



ciple a practical authority and predominance, which it could not generally obtain under a darker economy.

Love is, even in this world, an unfailing source of happiness. It is so in the natural constitution of things; just as fear is a source of pain, and confidence, of courage. Whoever truly loves God has a secret fountain of joy within his bosom, which the distresses of this life can never quench, though they may sometimes a little disturb it. It is this inward peace, this heart-felt satisfaction, which alone truly deserves the name of happiness. It was this which sustained the apostles and martyrs of the first ages, and made them, in the midst of suffering, more than conquerors. It is this which still pours its sacred influence around us, and sheds a mild, a holy light upon the path of our pilgrimage.

“Perfect love casteth out fear.” How full of encouragement and peace is this blessed declaration! And it is the language of nature in our hearts, as well as of the word of God. Let us love God above all things. This surely is no hard precept, no heavy service. What is it that Christianity enjoins us?—to contemplate that which is most perfect; to admire that which is most lovely; to imitate that which is most excellent; to cultivate feelings and affections which are essentially amiable, suited to our nature, and the sources, even in this world, of almost all the happiness we can enjoy

or bestow ; to be matured for everlasting bliss ; and by the perfect sanctification of our souls, become meet for that kingdom, where faith shall be lost in knowledge, and hope in possession, but where charity, unextinguished and unextinguishable, shall reign and triumph for ever.

I conclude with a passage which should be graven upon every heart :—“ God is love and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

## ON FAITH.

1813.

MAN was created pure, and placed in a world which the bounty of his Maker had stored with every thing that could supply the materials of knowledge to his mind, and minister delight to his senses. But man rebelled against his Creator; his appetites were corrupted, and his reason depraved. The same world, which was intended to be the scene of his happiness and improvement, became the theatre of his guilt and misery. The faculties with which he had been endowed, that he might contemplate the nature and imitate the perfections of his heavenly Father, were perverted to supply the means of selfish gratification; and all that rich store of blessings, which the bounty of Heaven had showered around him, furnished only multiplied incentives to his cupidity. Sin had poisoned the very fountains of happiness, as the bee extracts the venom which arms her sting from her own honey. Yet God remained unaltered and unalterable. His law had assigned, by an everlasting sanction, to holiness, glory and immortality; to guilt, confusion and misery. Amidst the gloom of that fearful

night which had enveloped the earth, some gleams of a heavenly light were still visible. Amidst all the perplexity and contradictions, the strange appearances and inextricable mystery, which seemed to have taken possession of the world, which confounded the most wise and daunted the most courageous, there were feelings within, which whispered a present Providence; there were indications without, which pointed to an ulterior dominion, to a day of righteous retribution, to the final triumphs of virtue and piety.

What then was the foundation of religion to beings thus situated; of that religion, I mean, which, separated from the pomp of processions and sacrifices, established its dominion in the heart, and became, however imperfectly, a rule of moral conduct? Faith, undoubtedly;—a persuasion of the righteous government of God, sufficiently powerful to overcome the solicitations of the senses; to induce a rational regard to his will, in contradiction to present appearances. Faint, indeed, was the light, and feeble the influence of this blessed principle. Yet it existed even under the darkest dispensation, and waited only a happier hour to break forth in its full lustre.

That hour at length arrived, when the Immanuel descended from heaven to redeem his guilty servants. A new era now opened on the world; the Gospel of pardon and reconciliation was published abroad; and Faith was declared to be the great principle of the new dispensation, by which Jew

and Gentile should be justified and brought nigh to God. It was the same faith which had been since the world was ; “ by which the elders obtained a good report ; ” “ the substance of things hoped for ; the evidence of things not seen ; ” but it was enlightened by the revelation of the most important truths, and directed chiefly towards a new object. “ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The language of the New Testament is quite unambiguous ; it offers salvation to sinners through faith in the Redeemer. The nature of the Gospel declarations can excite surely no surprize in any mind that is adequately impressed with the value of the discoveries which Christianity imparted. The great truths of natural religion remained, indeed, unaltered : in their nature they are eternal, and incapable of diminution. But to man, helpless and criminal, something was wanting far different from a more distinct view of the glory of God and of his holiness. That sight, which exalts the bliss of the most perfect spirits, would have overwhelmed him with horror and consternation. He could not dare to approach the ark of the living God, lest he should perish. Man needed a Saviour ; and when He who was appointed to that glorious character appeared, proclaiming with Divine authority forgiveness to a race of condemned and suffering sinners, was it possible that he should not claim and attract to himself their chief attention ? Faith in God and his



righteous providence is undoubtedly the foundation of all religion; but faith in the Redeemer must be the leading principle of an economy of redemption.

Let us then endeavour to consider more closely the extent and efficacy of this evangelical principle.

The language of the holy Scriptures is often concise, but never inaccurate. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is indeed a short sentence, and has appeared to some a strange and summary manner of imparting salvation. But it requires only a little reflection to perceive its comprehensiveness. For, who is the Lord Jesus Christ? He who has been appointed by the Father to be the Saviour of all the ends of the earth. And why is it that in this character he possesses so powerful a claim upon our attention? Because we are sinners, subject to death, as the just reward of our offences, and incapable of rescuing ourselves; because holiness is life everlasting, and in our own strength we are unable to attain it. He who comes to Jesus, and asks salvation from him, must undoubtedly first be sensible that he needs it. He must feel, that in himself he has no hope; that he is justly exposed to the righteous wrath of God; that he possesses neither the means of satisfying his anger, nor the power of resisting it. He must understand the value of that atonement which the mercy of his Maker has provided; not merely as an abstract truth, to be contemplated with admiration, as a part of his provi-

dential economy, but as a truth of the deepest personal interest, unspeakably valuable and consoling to himself as a sinner. Without these previous dispositions, how is it possible that any one should believe in Christ, such as the Gospel has revealed him to us? And so disposed, is it not abundantly manifest, that in accepting him as our Saviour, we shall accept him as our Lord, and Prince, and Pattern; a Deliverer from the power of sin, as well as from its penalty; the Source of our strength; the Object of our affections; the living Image of holiness, to which we must be conformed; the Guardian in whom we are to trust; the Judge by whom we must be approved; whose favour is security and peace, whose acceptance is everlasting glory and happiness? In that economy of righteousness, which the wisdom of God had prepared before the foundation of the world, Christ is all in all; the source, the centre, and the end. He pervades and he comprehends the whole.

But there is a privilege attached to the faith of a Christian, so important, and so deeply interesting, that it deserves a more particular consideration. “Being *justified* by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Had a divine revelation informed us, that God, through the merits and intercession of his Son, was willing to pardon our sins on sincere repentance, to supply us with strength sufficient for his service, and finally to advance those who should be found worthy to a state of the most perfect happi-

ness ; this surely would have been justly esteemed to be intelligence of the very highest moment—“ good tidings of great joy to all people.” But the goodness of our heavenly Father has glorified his Son by the dispensation of a mercy yet more astonishing and complete. To the humble repentant believer in Jesus Christ he offers something beyond pardon, strength, and hope: he stretches out the arms of his paternal love, and receives him at once to his favour. Like the tender parent in the parable, he sees him while yet afar off, and welcomes him with the smile of gladness to his everlasting home.

There is something so unspeakably generous and elevated in that part of the Gospel promises which has been last mentioned, that it seems to me scarcely possible to consider it, without tracing (if I may so speak) the touches of an Almighty hand, the lineaments of a heavenly origin. In this world, all is cold, timid, and defensive. The sallies of an imprudent passion may be forgiven ; but a silent retrospective glance reminds us how greatly we offended. The assurances of renewed affection are perhaps received ; but there is still some half-restrained emotion, some well-recovered and well-explained inadvertency, that speaks a secret apprehension. There are terms and pledges and provisos. Resentment lurks under the form of dignity ; and suspicion wears the mask of prudence.

Earthly these passions of the earth,  
They perish where they had their birth.

In the counsels of our Almighty Benefactor all is great and noble; worthy of his exalted nature and comprehensive wisdom. Is it possible to conceive any thing more liberal in its character, or better suited to influence a mind capable of being affected by generosity, and sensible to emotions of gratitude, than the free offer of reconciliation and favour which the Gospel proposes? Is there in the whole circle of creation a spectacle more delightful than that of an injured benefactor throwing wide his arms, with all the eagerness of affectionate confidence, to receive his much-offending and much-humbled friend? It is one of the peculiar features of Christianity, that it addresses the most elevated sentiments of our nature; it calls forth whatever is truly noble; purifies it from its vile alloy, and fixes it on a sure and everlasting basis. In its character there is nothing low or compromising. The commands which it publishes are most strict and holy; the rewards which it promises are most excellent and animating; the motives which it employs are most affecting. Let our sentiments and actions correspond, then, with that high and holy dispensation. Let us yield to its influence without reserve and without fear; offering the sacrifice, not of a few painful restraints and heartless performances, but of every faculty and every feeling; "knowing in whom we have believed," and fully persuaded, that He who demands the consecration of all our powers, will abundantly justify the requisition, by exalting them to their full perfection, and employing them at once to the ad-

vancement of his own glory and of our highest and inconceivable felicity:

The foundation of a Christian faith is laid in humility. Where else should it rest, while it resides in the hearts of sinners? It is in the nature of sin to make us insensible to the degradation it occasions. Like a vile sorceress, she blinds the eyes of those whom she ensnares, to her own deformity: But could we see, as hereafter doubtless we shall see, the true glory of a pure and righteous God;—could we behold the love, and order, and felicity, and beauty, which reign with a serene and cloudless lustre through his happy empire; could we contemplate fully, and feel justly, the nameless abominations, the hopeless confusion, the shame, and desolation, and misery, which sin has wrought wherever its influence has extended; who is there that would not hide his head in the dust at the recollection of his past offences? It may happen, indeed, and probably it does often happen, that the first entrance on the paths of piety is attended with a delight so lively, as to subdue and swallow up every other emotion. Such appears to have been pretty generally the case among the first converts to Christianity. It may happen too, and I trust it does often happen, that they who have received the Gospel “with joy of the Holy Ghost,” so continue to tread faithfully in the paths of heavenly wisdom, as to experience, even to the end of their lives, “that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” But whether our entrance



into that holy laud be darkened with storms or cheered with sunshine ; whether the winding road of our pilgrimage conduct us along the green pasture or the barren wilderness ; the same convictions, the same feelings, the same dispositions, must reside in the bosom of Christians. All must be sensible that they are sinners ; all must feel a deep abhorrence of sin ; all must be humbled to the renunciation of every claim and every hope, that rests not on the merits and the mercy of their Redeemer. Without humility there is no faith, without faith there is no salvation.

We are too apt to consider faith as merely an act of the understanding. But it is impossible to read even a few pages of the New Testament, without perceiving, that the belief which it requires, and the importance of which it labours unceasingly to exalt, is allied to, and implies, an appropriate temper of mind, a peculiar state of the sentiments and dispositions. When the Apostle declares, that he testified unto all men “repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ,” is it not manifest, that the first is supposed to be the necessary precursor to the second ? And what is the uniform language of our blessed Redeemer ? “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another ?” “Ye judge after the flesh.” “Why do ye not understand my speech ? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil ; for he is a liar, and the father of it ; and because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” “He that

is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine; ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." Faith is promised as the reward of obedience: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Infidelity is denounced as a judgment on the disobedient; "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart; and be converted; and I should heal them."

There is a truth connected with what has just been remarked, too awful to be mentioned without pain, yet far too important to be wholly omitted: a truth, of a nature to awaken in every serious mind a spirit of humble and anxious self-examination. Our Saviour did not confine his charge of unbelief to those who openly rejected or opposed him: he directed it even against his own disciples, and clearly included in it one who constantly heard and followed him, till within a few days of his death. "When Jesus knew in himself, that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? there are some of you that believe not—for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him."

Nay, which is, if possible, yet more striking, he accuses the Jews of the disbelief of their own Scriptures;—even those very Jews who taught them in their synagogues; who quoted them in their assemblies; who bound them as phylacteries upon their garments; who were consumed by the most flaming zeal for their honour; who were ready to stone and crucify their Saviour, because they said he had spoken blasphemy against them. “It is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say, that he is your God, yet ye have not known him.” “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust: for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” Let us not imagine, that a blind assent to truths which we have inherited with our name and country, or even a passionate eagerness for a few favourite dogmas, will be mistaken by our all-seeing Judge for that holy principle to which the promises of the Gospel belong; which is a principle of conversion as well as of justification; and which is uniformly allied to that serious, humble, gentle, and grateful disposition, which the precepts and example of our Saviour inculcated, and which therefore can alone expect his final approbation and acceptance.

It is of the essence of an evangelical faith, that it draws off our regards from ourselves and fixes them on our Redeemer. Men do not naturally look upwards; they love to survey themselves; and they

examine to applaud. It is perfectly astonishing what contemptible frivolities we are capable of admiring, so that they belong only to ourselves. Not only parts and wit and intellectual attainments, but a gilt spur, a ribbon, a bracelet, a coach-and-four ; “ *Quantulacunque adeo est occasio, sufficit.*” The same principle operates powerfully in religion. Self-love rarely finds much difficulty in settling the moral account. Like the old juggler, she has all the rogueries of optics at her command, and applies them as she pleases. Every fault is seen in miniature ; every fair disposition is set in that light where its proportions seem the most graceful ; and our very defects appear to be the germs of excellencies. This tendency to self-approbation is undoubtedly innate in us all ; but it remained for the corruptions of Christianity to shew to what an excess of folly and profaneness it was capable of growing. Would it have been credible, if the history of past ages had not placed the matter beyond controversy, that men should seriously think it possible for us so much to over-do our appointed parts in life, and to accumulate by our exertions such a surplus of merits, as to be able safely to transfer a portion to our poor neighbours, just as children sell their fish at cards when they have made up their stake ? I remember formerly, in a grotto dedicated to a lady-saint of high reputation, to have seen the picture of an old friar, who perhaps may be in the calendar himself. It was a sad *daub*, but the countenance spoke the highest degree of self-complacency ; and underneath were written two

Latin lines, which expressed in substance ; “ What is it that God required of me ? To endure penances, to perform acts of merit. I have endured them ; I have performed them.” The sentiment was expressed with that haughty conciseness which characterises the language of the old Romans. And yet it is probable that this poor, vain, silly, ignorant creature had consumed the life of which he was so proud, in eating eggs, and counting beads, and illuminating the Lives of the Saints. But thus it is in some measure with us all. The standard of principle and the standard of action generally find means to meet. As the weather grows foul, the quicksilver descends ; but we are busy with our concerns, and shift the index, without much observing where it points. Few ever discover occasion for anxiety by merely contemplating their own hearts and lives ; “ Measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, they are not wise.” But faith opens our senses to new and higher objects ; it removes the “ veil from the heart ;” and while it reveals to us our naturally depraved and degraded condition, points to that holy Saviour who is indeed “ the Lord our Righteousness.” There we behold at once the proof of our corruption and its remedy ; and whilst we survey with grateful admiration the living image of excellence to which henceforward we must aspire, we learn—we cannot but learn—that genuine humility and self-abasement, which are the first elements of a new nature. The masters of wisdom in every art have



instructed us, if we would excel, to study continually the highest models, that we may learn to be dissatisfied with our own performances, and to conceive that ideal beauty which the most perfect specimens of human taste and genius have indeed never perfectly expressed, though they approach to it the most nearly. The principle which has ever been approved in earthly pursuits, Christianity has sanctified; but the model which it has presented to our minds, is not a dull image or a mouldering pillar, a poem or a picture—imperfect patterns of limited excellence; but a living object of admiration and affection; a Saviour and a Prince; a High Priest, such as indeed “became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;” who “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.” And “we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Faith is a practical principle. Indeed the very contrary seems to be the idea generally entertained by the opposers of Christianity; who speak of faith as if it were something perfectly abstract, superseding the common duties of morality. “M. Turgot” (says the Marquis de Condorcet, his biographer), “was too enlightened to expect that any thing but abuses could arise from any scheme of religion, that, loaded with speculative dogmas, makes the salvation of men depend upon their creed.” But Monsieur de Condorcet would have had no difficulty in ad-

mitting, that a man who believes diligence and honesty to be the road to wealth, is likely to be diligent and honest. He would freely have acknowledged, that, to convince men of the benefits which ultimately result from the regulation of their appetites and passions, is a very rational and sober method of inculcating the principles of morals. He would have confessed without hesitation, that the authors of l'Encyclopédie were animated in their undertaking, by a persuasion that the destruction of prejudices would tend to the general prosperity; and that when M. Turgot undertook the administration of the finances, he believed he should be able to render material service to the public. And probably, after having made these admissions, he would not have denied that the characters and conduct of men, and therefore their well-being in this life, are very materially influenced by the opinions they entertain; or, in other words, "depend upon their creed." And after all these acknowledgments, surely any body, except Monsieur de Condorcet, would confess, that a religion which says that the well-being of men in another world, or in a single word, their "salvation, depends upon their creed," is not upon the face of it false and chimerical. The truth is, as any one upon a moment's reflection must admit, that men, so far as they are under the direction of reason, always act with reference to something they believe. Why do we rise in the morning? Because we believe it to be moral, healthful, necessary. Why do we go to rest at night?

Because we believe that we shall be refreshed by repose. Why do we attend in our shops, or prosecute diligently our professions? Because we believe that it will conduce to the advancement of our fortunes. Why do we travel into foreign parts? Because we believe that there is something to be learned or to be enjoyed. And thus, through every department and sub-division of human life, it is most plain that a previous persuasion of some nature must precede every voluntary action whatsoever. Can it then be doubted, that a serious and cordial recognition of all those momentous truths which revelation has taught us, will bring with it important practical consequences? Is it nothing to know that we are sinners, and that the end of sin is death? Is it nothing to be convinced that the only begotten Son of God has died for our offences, and “ever liveth to make intercession for us?” Can we be persuaded that all who turn to him in penitence and gratitude shall be accepted, sustained, and blessed, without being in the faintest measure affected by the intelligence? Is it credible that any one should thoroughly believe that to be conformed to the image of his Redeemer is an appointed mean and indispensable condition of happiness, yet remain in willing bondage to sin and Satan? Nothing but the strange contradiction between the professions and practice of Christians could ever have introduced the smallest difficulty into this subject. The faith of many of us is so faint, that its fruits are scarcely visible; but therefore to doubt its power, is as if the shivering Lap-

lander should deny the heat of a solstitial summer. None, whose hearts have been deeply impressed with the declarations of the Gospel, ever questioned their practical efficacy; and none surely, who have experienced their efficacy, can cease to pray with the deepest fervour for the increased energy, within their souls, of that blessed principle by which they first embraced them; the source of holiness and the foundation of hope.

How then may we hope to grow in this truly Christian grace? The Holy Scriptures have not been silent in this particular; their language is equally plain for instruction and consolation. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." The way to increase in faith is to increase in practical holiness. The more earnestly we desire and labour to be conformed to the image of our Saviour, the more clearly shall we discern the excellence of that scheme of salvation which he has provided, the more sensibly shall we feel the reality of heavenly things. This blessedness is sealed to us by the un-failing promises of God. It is laid, too, in the un-alterable constitution of things, which his hand has formed, and which the declarations of his Spirit discover and sanction. How should it be otherwise? While, in humble and fervent prayer, we seek for

strength and knowledge from on high, will not our near approach to God be accompanied with a more powerful and penetrating perception of his presence, his providence, his parental care and kindness? While our eyes are fixed on the Redeemer, and our hearts are awakened to joy and gratitude in the remembrance of his unutterable mercies; while we feel our weakness sustained, our wants supplied, our sorrows lightened, and our wavering spirits refreshed, directed, and sanctified, by the effusion of that grace which his sufferings have purchased for us; shall we doubt the merits of his blood, the efficacy of his intercession, or the inviolable sanctity of his promises? While we walk in the path which Christ has trod before us, our steps directed heavenwards, our thoughts and desires soaring above this perishable orb, and our hearts already arrived at the land of our everlasting rest; while we daily discover more plainly the wisdom of the whole plan and constitution of Providence, and mark the coincidence of design visible in all his dispensations; while we discern more manifestly, and feel more practically, the excellency of that holiness which the terrors of the Law and the mercies of the Gospel have alike exalted; while the soul is daily more conformed to that temper which the Holy Spirit of God breathes into us, purified and adorned as a hallowed temple to receive its celestial visitor; while we taste the very pledges of his bounty, and prelibations of that perfect bliss which his presence diffuses through the realms of glory: while every



thing within, and every thing around, concurs to attest the truth of those blessed assurances which fill our hearts with gladness and our tongues with praise; is it possible we should cast towards them the jealous glance of an unquiet scepticism; is it possible that we should not hold to them as to the anchor of the soul, and “grapple them to our hearts with links of steel?” If natural causes tend to their consequences, if increased evidence be allied to increased conviction, if the heart have any influence on the understanding, if there be one rational principle in man, or truth in his Maker, thus it must be. In this world, men are soon persuaded wherever their wishes precede their inquiries; their understandings easily become the converts of their feelings. Let us love the Gospel entirely, and there can be no doubt that we shall cordially believe it.

The value of a lively faith is, perhaps, never felt more sensibly than in our devotional exercises. Without it, they are but poor formalities, the service neither of reason nor feeling; with it, they are life and strength and peace. St. James plainly attributes the efficacy of prayer chiefly to the faith which accompanies it; “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed: for let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” And our Saviour promised to his disciples, that whatever

they should “ask in prayer believing, they should receive.” It may be a question, perhaps, how far these directions are to be applied to each particular subject of our petitions; but there can be no question that at the least they enjoin a deep and sensible conviction of the certainty of heavenly things, of the presence and power and faithfulness of Him whom we address, of the reality of our wants, and the truth of those blessings for which we ask. Without such a persuasion, and the feelings which belong to it, it is too plain there can be no real devotion. For prayer is the language of the heart; and it is but a mockery of God, to ask for blessings which we have no anxiety to obtain; or cry to him for assistance, while we are ignorant of the nature of his promises, and perhaps only half convinced of his active, parental, and ever present providence. Far different are the prayers of the true believer; full of gratitude for the mercies he has received, of humiliation under the sense of his unworthiness, of hope and joy and confidence in his everlasting Father and Benefactor;—full of faith, because flowing from a spirit enlightened and converted by the sanctifying power of the Gospel, and animated with the blessed assurance that they will be accepted in the Redeemer, and answered by the communication of the best temporal mercies, and of every spiritual blessing.

Faith is the great sustaining principle on which all the religious affections repose. Every sentiment which is directed towards God, or the Re-

deemer, every feeling which is awakened by the contemplation of that glorious region which is appointed for our eternal rest, necessarily supposes a lively faith, the germ from which they spring, and from whence they draw their nutriment. Wherever that root has struck deep into a kindly soil, we shall shortly behold a luxuriant vegetation shooting forth in every form of grace and beauty, and lifting its aspiring brow to heaven. How can we more certainly assist its growth, than by feeding and cherishing the source from which it derives its vigour?

Finally, it is faith alone, which, through all the varying scenes of life, can give to us steadfastness of purpose and unity of action. The ancient philosophy sought anxiously for some principle which might secure men against the unsteadiness of their nature, by proposing to them an ultimate object of pursuit sufficiently important to attract and reward their constant attention. But men are too mutable, and this world too imperfect. It belonged to Revelation to fulfil what the loftier minds of earlier days had conceived and prosecuted in vain. Nothing can secure us against the inconstancy of our own tempers and opinions, variable as the forms of every earthly fashion, but a steady regard to Him who is alone for ever unchangeable. The Christian “walks by faith, not by sight;” “he endures as seeing Him who is invisible.” He has been cheered with a view of that glorious city which terminates the long avenue of earthly labours; and

when faint and wearied in his pilgrimage, he can ascend some neighbouring eminence, and refresh his exhausted spirits by contemplating its lustre. The events of this life, indeed, sometimes seem strange to him ; but, amidst all the elemental war around, he knows that the laws of nature remain unaltered, that the dominion of wisdom and order is not subverted. He sees a heavenly Hand leading every event to its destined issue, and touching the secret spring of every dispensation. The afflictions which befall him he knows that he has merited, and trusts that the mercy of his God will turn them to his correction and improvement. The sorrows which may sometimes assail those who are dear to him, he beholds, indeed, with the deepest sensibility, yet without dismay ; for he has learned that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth ;” he remembers who they were “of whom the world was not worthy.” He sees that violence and confusion have taken possession of this world, and that each in his turn, during his sojourn here, must suffer something from the general disorder ; but he is well “assured that the Lord’s hand is not shortened, neither his ear heavy ;” that “his eyes are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers.” Above all, the Christian fixes his eye with humble, yet stedfast confidence, upon his Redeemer. He has not forgotten the day when that merciful Lord called him out of darkness to see the light of his glorious salvation. All that he recollects of his earliest hours, all that he has experienced during his



subsequent pilgrimage, concurs to teach him the sad lesson of his own unworthiness, the consoling knowledge of the Saviour's bounty. To him he renders the willing tribute of gratitude for the past, the humble offering of confidence for the future; He entirely desires to be devoted to his glory; and whether that glory be advanced by a few years of happiness or of sorrow, can surely be of little moment. To a mind deeply impressed with the great doctrines of the Gospel, sensible to the value of spiritual strength and consolation, and animated with the cheering hope of a holy, everlasting rest, nothing seems fearful, nothing worthy of a deep or lasting disquietude, but the sense of the power of internal corruption, and the dread that it may yet break forth to the destruction of every hope. Yet the declarations of the Scriptures are full of comfort. "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." "I am the First, and I am the last—and have the keys of hell and of death." "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

"As then we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so let us walk in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith." The unreserved surrender of the whole heart to God will bring with it whatever is really necessary for safety or for happiness. In His hands are all the events of all creation; and by Him they are ordained,



disposed, employed, to produce the ultimate and inconceivable felicity of his faithful servants. Our part is exceedingly plain and simple: to pray; to watch, to put our trust in Him; to study and to do his will; to live under the constant sense and protecting shadow of his providence; to have a growing love of his goodness, and a cheerful confidence in his unfailing care and kindness; to be the willing instruments of his power, yielded up in every faculty to his directing influence. Thus, our regards fixed on the Redeemer, may we walk with an even step along the rough and twilight paths of life; neither dazzled with the vanities, nor dismayed by the dangers that surround us. Thus shall we be enabled to receive and to survey the changeful events of this world with an heavenly tranquillity; sharing, indeed, its labours, tasting its satisfactions, and sympathising with every sorrow, yet spiritual, cheerful, and serene. And thus, after a few years of mingled joy and suffering, shall we arrive at that land where fear and conflict, where doubt and disappointment, shall be no more: "into which no enemy enters, and from which no friend departs."

## ON HOPE.

1813.

WHEN Alexander was about to undertake the conquest of Asia, he distributed his possessions among his friends. Some one, observing the magnificence of his presents, asked him what he intended to retain for himself. He replied, *Hope*. The servants of Christ, though in general little resembling, and little anxious to imitate, the lords of this world, may justly adopt the language of the Grecian hero. They have engaged in an enterprize so great, they aspire to a kingdom so rich and glorious, that they can well afford to abandon to others the ordinary honours and gratifications of life. Hope is their portion; a hope "full of immortality." How should they exchange it for any worldly possessions, or even consent to share it with transient and perishable pleasures! "Opes, honores, et universum vitæ ambitum, ad majora nati, non contemnunt, sed relinquunt sæculo!\*"

There is, perhaps, no Christian grace which is more characteristic of the religion to which it belongs, than that which has just been mentioned.

\* See Epitaph on Isaac Barrow.

Hope is the natural support of those who are for a time subjected to trials; and whose success depends upon their perseverance. It necessarily supposes a fixed and entire preference of some state of things which is expected, over that which is possessed. And it has the peculiar power of so realizing to the fancy what is removed from the senses; and borrowing, as it were, a happiness from futurity; that where it is lively and vigorous, it can shed a light on the most obscure path; can soften every sorrow; and make every labour light. Thus it seems to point out, in a single word, the nature of the Christian Pilgrimage in this world; the views and expectations best fitted to supply refreshment in our journey; and the temper and disposition of mind to which both should give birth;—a temper at once serious and cheerful; prepared for the trials of religion, and sensible of its consolations; collected; but not gloomy; and joyful without levity and without excess.

I have often thought that the goodness of God is, if possible; more distinctly marked in the injunctions which he has imposed on us, than even in the promises which he has given us; or the evidences of bounty and beneficence scattered through the natural creation. He has so identified our duty with our happiness;—he has selected with such profound wisdom and unspeakable mercy the sources of our perfection and only lasting good; as the proper evidences of our allegiance,—that I know not how any one who has been accustomed to consider human

nature attentively, can fail to discover in this beautiful arrangement the stamp of a Divine original. This truth can hardly be better illustrated than by the Christian grace which we are now considering. Had Hope been left unnoticed by the inspired writers, had it been wholly omitted in the circle of Christian duties, is it not plain that every good man must secretly have cherished the blessed sentiment for his consolation, strength, and joy? Must he not have sought, in its cheering influence, a light in this land of shadows; and clung to it as an anchor on which to ride in safety amid the temptations and sufferings of this stormy region! How gratefully then should we receive, how diligently cherish, that blessed provision which the bounty of our Maker has furnished! How deeply adore the gracious Father who has encouraged and enjoined us, in imitation of our Redeemer, to "look unto the joy that is set before us;" "to endure the cross and despise the shame," "having respect unto the recompense of the reward."

"Henceforth I learn that to obey is best  
And love with fear the only God. \*"

It happens, I imagine, not unfrequently, that Christians, especially in their early acquaintance with religion, feel some surprise at the exalted station which St. Paul has assigned to Hope, among the chief graces of the Gospel, supported by Faith

\* Par. Lost. Lib. 12.



on the one side and heavenly Charity on the other. It appears singular, at a first glance, that a feeling which seems to be almost instinctive, with little of a moral nature attached to it, and as we should judge, inseparable from the anticipation of future happiness, should not only be reckoned among the duties, but even ranked with the highest attainments of the Christian life. But this difficulty, with many others, disappears as we become better acquainted with religion ;—like a speck floating before the eyes, it is the imperfection of our senses, not a defect in the object we contemplate. It is too plain that the hope which St. Paul has so highly exalted is no vulgar or ordinary affection. Look on the world around, and survey the conduct and characters of men. Can the largest charity believe that the hope of a Christian is among the common principles of action? Are worldly persons in any visible or effectual measure animated by a lively and joyful expectation of “the glory which shall be revealed?” I fear there is little doubt, that if the hearts of our fellow creatures were laid open, none would appear to be deeply affected with the hopes of the Gospel, but those who love its precepts. Let us then consider some of the peculiar features which belong to the Christian Hope, that we may the more justly appreciate its excellence.

The Hope of the Gospel is founded on the promises of the Gospel. It has its roots therefore in faith. It is among the fairest and most delightful fruits of that parent stock of all Christian excel-



lence. In proportion, too, as our faith is lively, will our hope be animated and joyful; and so inseparable are these kindred graces, that in a large proportion, perhaps in a majority of instances, the word expressive of the one might be substituted for the other in Holy Writ, without any material alteration in the passage. However, the ideas are not identical. Faith includes a belief in *all* the declarations of God; in the more awful parts of his economy as well as in the more gracious; in his threatenings as well as his promises: Hope has respect only to the rewards which his bounty has set before us, and supposes not merely a deep conviction of their reality, but a joyful perception of their approach, and of our own expected and inestimable interest in them. It seems to belong, therefore, to a more advanced state of Christian knowledge and experience. It is Faith in its progress towards Love; elevated a little above the damps of this chilling climate, and cheered with the beams of a brighter region, but not yet exalted to the seat of everlasting rest.

The excellence and value of this Christian grace will be further evident, if we consider that Hope necessarily implies an intimate acquaintance with the objects of its desire. No man can earnestly hope for any thing which he does not long to possess; and no man ever desired ardently to be in possession of a blessing which he had not first learned to appreciate. If therefore we would glow with the hope of immortality, it is indispensable

that we acquire a just and lively apprehension of its value. There is, indeed, a certain notion of future happiness, which is easily formed, and therefore perhaps pretty general; made up of negatives, like the idea of space, infinite in extent and filled with nothing. This might do tolerably well, if in our present state we had no temptations to encounter, and no image of perfect holiness to which we must aspire. But he surely must be little acquainted with human nature, who can imagine that an apprehension so indefinite, an expectation so vague and indistinct, will prove, in such a world as this, a practical principle of much efficacy. Man was not made to be powerfully affected by abstractions. Our appetites and passions are continually soliciting us to evil; the most powerful elements of our nature are among our enemies, tending to sin by their own corruption, or capable too readily of being allured towards it.

The visible objects of this world press immediately upon our senses; their language is sufficiently distinct, the bribes they offer, alas! but too intelligible. Can we flatter ourselves that such enemies are to be overcome by names and notions;—faith in we know not whom, hope of we know not what? Can natural propensities be subdued or superseded, without the excitement of new interests? Is it possible that evil affections should be effectually eradicated, unless others which are more excellent be engrafted? The whole analogy of our nature, all the experience of life, speaks wisdom on this sub-

ject. It is the proper office of Hope to triumph over the solicitations of our senses and passions; to "fill us" (in the language of the Apostle) "with all joy and peace in believing." But hope is a mere name, if it is fixed on nothing substantial; if it bends its eye on vacancy, and "feeds upon the wind." Such certainly was not the hope of the early Christians. Such is not the Christian affection which St. Paul has seated on the same throne with Faith and Charity,

And is it then possible for us to form a just idea of the nature of everlasting happiness:—of those joys which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man?" Certainly it is possible, and easy, and essential; nor were the passages in Holy Writ, which describe the blessed realms of glory as surpassing in brightness all human powers of conception, ever intended to encourage or to justify in us an entire ignorance of their nature. Who ever was presumptuous enough to suppose that he could comprehend his Creator?—"Canst thou by searching find out God?" Yet who, that has any acquaintance with religion, ever doubted that we are capable of knowing him, and most sacredly obliged to study his perfections? "Behold" (said our blessed Redeemer), "the kingdom of God is within you." "The kingdom of God" (said the Apostle) "is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." These surely are elements of happiness

which we are capable of understanding, attaining, approving; and it is to the diffusion and perfection of these in "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," that the hope of the Christian is directed. Hope then, let it never be forgotten, is inseparable from vital experimental religion. It has its birth in the first fruits of practical holiness; it "grows with its growth, and strengthens with its strength;" and enlarges with our increasing acquaintance with the blessedness of true piety. It aspires to the perfection of that, whose excellence has been known and proved; which is seen even upon earth, though, as it were, "in dim eclipse;" which can be conceived clearly, and desired ardently, because it has feelingly been experienced.

There is yet another consideration which may tend to illustrate still more fully the nature and virtue of the affection which we are considering. Hope manifestly supposes that "our conversation be in heaven," "for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also." It implies therefore, in all its essential properties, a deadness to this world; an habitual preference and frequent contemplation of our heavenly and expected inheritance. That such is the true character of this affection will be questioned certainly by none who have felt its power as directed towards any object of desire in this life. When the mind is filled with the conception of an absent happiness, how difficult is it to confine our attention to the ordinary occupations of life; how-



slowly do the moments seem to roll; how readily does the imagination wing her flight towards the objects of our wishes! Who ever was long absent from his native country without returning in thought to the haunts of his happier hours; or approached the shores of his wave-encircled island, without watching eagerly the moment when a dusky speck shall rise in the horizon, and chiding the winds and waves that bear him so slowly homeward? Human nature is the same under all circumstances. Its passions are not changed, though their objects may be altered. If we are really filled with the hope of immortality, we cannot but earnestly desire to possess it; and he but deceives his own heart, who fancies that he is animated with this heavenly affection, while his conduct evinces that his chief desires and anxieties are directed towards earthly things.

Hope then, let us be persuaded—that hope which the writers of the New Testament perpetually exalt, and which St. Paul has reckoned among the first of Christian graces—is something far above the vague anticipation of an unknown future good. It has its foundation in a deep and lively faith; it is inseparably allied to vital holiness; and it implies, as a necessary consequence and concomitant, the permanent practical predominance of spiritual affections.

It is impossible to have any tolerable insight into the writings of the Apostles, without being struck with the prodigious energy and life with which the



hopes of the Gospel acted upon the minds of the early Christians. They appear to have possessed so lively a perception of the excellency of the treasure which was laid up for them in heaven, that neither trials nor persecutions, neither the temptations of their spiritual nor the malice of their earthly enemies, could quench the ardour, or even long interrupt the pleasures, which flowed from their holy affections. The religion of the early Christians was unquestionably a cheerful religion; full of feeling, full of energy, full of elevation; triumphant over sin, and sorrow, and suffering, through the power of the Holy Ghost. It was in the midst of pain, and weariness, and want, in the constraint of a prison, in the anticipation of death, that St. Paul addressed to his young converts most of those Epistles in which the habitual tenor of his feelings is so eloquently pourtrayed; in which he exhibits, with the powers of the deepest sensibility, "the riches of the glory of God," and the excellencies of his heavenly inheritance. Himself he describes as "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" "filled with comfort, exceedingly joyful in all his tribulation." Of the Thessalonians he declares, that they became followers of him and of the Lord, "having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost; so *that they were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*" For the Ephesians he prays; "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in

the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." For the Roman converts; "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." How far it is fitting that Christians in the present day should indulge that joyful and triumphant spirit which appears to have animated the early Church, must doubtless materially depend upon their proficiency in real religion. But it is surely natural to suppose that the temper which the Apostles enjoyed themselves, and laboured to communicate to their disciples, is that to which we should, with all diligence, though certainly with all humbleness of mind, endeavour to aspire. And when we consider that two at least of the three chief Christian graces are, in the nature of things, sources of the most lively happiness, and essentially allied to "the bright sunshine of the soul," it may be reasonably doubted, whether any one can properly rest satisfied with religious attainments, which, with a due allowance for natural temper and incidental circumstances, do not promote a substantial joy and gladness of heart.

The hopes of a Christian are secured to him by the most sacred and inviolable pledge, even the promise and the oath of Him who cannot fail; "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong

consolation; who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast; and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered; even Jesus." But St. Paul has urged in another place arguments, if possible, still more powerful: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" And, "if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." It is impossible for any reasoning to be more cogent or more consoling. The first part of the argument is pretty generally admitted, and doubtless in some measure felt, by every sincere Christian; though very imperfectly by the best of us. But I have doubts whether the second observation is as often remembered; though in its nature practical, and peculiarly fitted for our apprehension. It appeals to our own experience for an assurance of the bounty of our Maker; and refers us, for evidence of his future mercies, to a recollection of the past. Indeed, our religious attainments are too generally so low, and the nature we have inherited is so frail and so corrupt, that it is not always easy to feel as sensibly as we ought the inestimable value of the blessings which we enjoy. Sufferings and temptations, though but moderate in their degree, are sufficient to cloud our brightest hopes; and we are sometimes ready to stand in doubt whether we

have not altogether mistaken the path of happiness; But these are only feverish dreams, the phantoms of an hour of darkness. Consider the import of those blessed words, "*Being reconciled to God.*" They contain a picture of happiness more rich; more full, more glorious, than the pen of poetry or eloquence ever delineated. And compare now the state of those who possess this heavenly assurance, with the sad condition of our less happy brethren. Be it that the Christian sacrifices the pleasures and the honours of this life: be it (though it is not always so,) that through "much tribulation" he inherits eternal life;—yet "there is hope in his end, saith the Lord;" "his light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" he is not forgotten of his God; in a few years all his labours are ended, and he enters into his everlasting rest. Meanwhile, what is the world which he has renounced, and what the too-often envied enjoyments of those who claim it as their portion; He who understood and enjoyed them all, has left us the testimony of his experience; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Not that life indeed is scantily supplied with satisfactions, for God has showered his blessings abundantly around us. But without Him the brightest pleasures, though they delight us for a moment, are essentially unsatisfying, and leave nothing but regret behind them. The hour-glass is soon run out, and a death-bed reveals in a moment the folly of all our pursuits, and empti-



ness of all our enjoyments: There Louis, who for eighty years had been the idol of his people, felt at last and acknowledged his errors, and transmitted to his successor a lesson of wisdom, which he had learned only when it was too late. There Condé, the darling of victory, the prince of heroes, slighting all his achievements, and the glory they had purchased for him, declared that virtue was the only object worthy the pursuit of a wise man. There Salmasius\*, after a life of literary labours and triumphs, deplored with his expiring breath the vanity of his acquirements; “Eheu! vitam perdidit operosè nihil agendo.” “Alas! I have wasted my days in toil, and have done nothing.” Indeed, it should seem quite sufficient to read the language in which the inspired writers speak of this world, and to cast a hasty glance on the notices which history has left us, to convince us that those only are to be envied, who can relinquish it entirely, having their hopes secured upon a better inheritance. In the New Testament it is described as, in a considerable measure, subjected to Satan, whom Christ appears to have designated by the title of “the prince of this world;” words of an extensive and awful import. Doubtless his authority is greatly contracted, through the merciful interposition of our Redeemer. Yet how is it possible to hear of the tragedies

\* I am not quite certain whether it was Salamasius or Grotius, of whom this anecdote has been preserved. Nor is it important: their literary fame is equal.



which have in every age been acted upon our globe; without believing that the expressions which the Scriptures contain are something more than figures! In this happy land indeed; and in these happy days, surrounded as we are with knowledge, and riches, and refinement; enjoying; even in war, the best privileges of peace, and cheered with the glad tidings of the Gospel of righteousness, we may be disposed to indulge in pleasing visions of the general happiness of our fellow-creatures; measuring, in some degree, their feelings by our own, and willing (naturally and justly willing, to find, in the imagination of their enjoyments, a source of pious thankfulness and pleasure. Of all illusions, perhaps, this is the most amiable and innocent. But no mistake is free from danger; and it becomes the humble Christian to acquire fortitude sufficient to contemplate with entire resignation, though not indeed without sensibility, every part of the dispensations of his Maker. I know not whether, to a feeling mind, the past history and present condition of our fellow-creatures, is not, of all subjects, the most affecting. How have they been trampled down age after age; the slaves of sin; the sport of tyranny and ambition; equally a prey to their own vices; and to those of their governors! Even while I now write, while the peals of triumph are ringing round us, and the "song of Hope" is heard again, what thousands are perishing in misery, the victims of wickedness and folly; what tens of thousands are weeping in silence, over the unknown death or

hopeless captivity of those who were most dear to them?

Of unregarded fame

Died the mean man;—yet did he leave behind  
 One who shall never say her daily prayers  
 Of him forgetful; who to every sound  
 Of distant war, lending an eager ear,  
 Grew pale and trembled; at her cottage door  
 The widowed one shall sit, and never know  
 Her husband slaughtered, but in hope and fear  
 Weep on\*.

Nor is the present age more full of sorrows than those which are past. The heart sickens at the contemplation of the horrors which fill the pages of history;—which have swelled the triumphs of Eastern conquerors, and tracked the steps of the plunderers of the West; which have “dyed the sands of Africa, and stained with silent and inglorious torrents the snows of the polar regions†.” Civilization, we are told, has generally begun in conquest; thus our blessings have their foundation in misery: it has always produced corruption; and thus they end in guilt. Surely it is not in a world like this, that any wise or good man would wish to take up his permanent residence, even if it were possible. Or grant that these colours are too dark and gloomy: let the scene be sketched by the brightest pencil: yet there is sickness, and sorrow,

\* Joan of Arc, by R. Southey.

† Essay on natural Society, by Mr. Burke.

and weariness, and pain, and disappointment, and separation from those we love: there is sin within us and around us; and labour, the fruit of sin; and death, the end of both. Undoubtedly, all this notwithstanding, existence is generally a blessing: I mean independently of its reference to futurity. But he surely is greatly to be pitied, who can think that such an existence is worthy of being compared with a holy and everlasting kingdom; and he too is not wholly blameless, who, with the promised inheritance before him, still casts a sad and lingering look at the world which he renounces. I knew a French gentleman who had passed some of his early years at Paris, and tasted, I fear, too freely of the gaieties and vices of that capital. He delighted to talk of the happiness of his younger days, before the Revolution had driven him abroad; and he still ended, with a sigh, "*Je pleure ma jeunesse.*" The confession was very honest and very melancholy. He mourned the loss of pleasures which he had enjoyed only a little while, but of which he still cherished too lively a recollection. If all whose hearts are devoted to this world were equally sincere, I am afraid the same lamentation would be often repeated. Compare now this acknowledgment with the language of the blessed Apostle; and let the fondest lover of this life judge between them: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifesta-

tion of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity (not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same) *in hope*; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they; but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by Hope. But Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth; why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

—*With patience wait for it.*—This is in perfect conformity with the language of our Redeemer: "In patience possess ye your souls." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Hope is given us for our consolation; and consolation is intended for those who need it. The nature of this heavenly grace implies that we are at present subjected to trials, which prove and exercise our faith; which are sufficient to arouse and invigorate the mind, but never to overwhelm it. The Christian's path is beset with snares; and happy, happy they, who at the close of life, when they cast their eyes backwards, can behold the traces of suffering, but not of sin. Tears and anguish of heart are indeed the proper consequences of guilt, at once its punishment and its cure: the tears that flow

from any other cause are only yielded to the infirmity of our nature. And these are quickly wiped away, where the heart is right with God. For patience, courage, and fortitude, are as essential to the character of the complete Christian, as the fairest graces of piety. We dishonour God, if we distrust his faithfulness; we deny our Redeemer, if we are afraid "to take the cross, and follow after him." The road is not long, and it leads direct to heaven. How can we think it sad, when we recollect who it is that sustains, and whither he conducts us!

Still unmoved let Hope remain,  
 Fixed on true substantial joy:  
 Dangers then shall threat in vain,  
 Pains torment, or cares annoy:  
 Then shall every guiltless pleasure  
 Smile with charms unknown before,  
 Hope, secure in real treasure,  
 Mourn her blasted joys no more:  
 Then through each revolving year,  
 Though earthly glories fade away,  
 Though youth, and strength, and life itself decay;  
 Yet still more bright the prospect shall appear,  
 Happier still the latest day,  
 Brightest far the parting ray:  
 O'er life's last scene celestial beams shall shine,  
 Till death at length shall burst the chain,  
 While songs of triumph sound on high;  
 Then shall Hope her power resign,  
 Lost in endless ecstasy,  
 And never-fading joy in heaven's full glories reign\*.

\* Poems and Essays by the late Miss Bowdler.



## ON SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS.

1813.

CHRISTIANITY, among its many excellencies, has this peculiar advantage over every other system of ethical instruction, that it exhibits to its disciples, in the image of their Divine Master, a perfect model of all the virtues and graces which it enjoins. In the character of Him who died upon the cross for our redemption, we behold every element of Christian perfection, happily and harmoniously combined, occupying its proper station, exhibited in its just proportions, and actively exercised towards the only ends worthy of our existence, the glory of God and the welfare of our fellow-creatures. The picture of Jesus Christ portrayed by the Evangelists differs from the divine and moral precepts embodied in their writings, as a living man from his anatomy: so that to a mind deeply versed in the Sacred Writings, and imbued (through the power of God,) with their true spirit, there is perhaps no method for solving practical difficulties so short and satisfactory, as to conceive for a moment a scene in Judea, and consider what course of conduct our Saviour would have adopted himself, or recom-

mended to others, under similar circumstances. Only we must recollect, that it is always necessary to study a model accurately, which we propose to adopt for an authority.

If this living image of Christian excellence be deserving of our most attentive contemplation, for our instruction in the true spirit and proper limits of the active and social duties, it possesses a still higher value in respect to those spiritual sentiments which form a very large part of the Christian character, and distinguish it so advantageously from every other. These it is plainly difficult to define by a written rule; and as they are not so directly and visibly connected with the system of social life as the principles of justice and benevolence, to determine their nature and offices experimentally proves a slow and somewhat ambiguous process. Hence perhaps, in part, it has happened, that many persons, whose imaginations have been affected by religion, without any real conversion of heart, have been enabled, by exhibiting extraordinary appearances of spirituality in their conversation and manners, to deceive for a time some truly pious and experienced Christians. Thus Montanus and Manes acquired, in former days, a share of credit and consequence which their practical merits never would have produced for them; and Munzer, and the other *celestial prophets*, as they were called, who, in the days of Luther, excited the rustic war, and at last perished miserably in their sins, were able, for a time, by a sort of ecstatic devotion, and lofty claims to inspiration, to

deceive even the excellent and sagacious Melancthon. Hence too, in part, it may be explained why many pious Christians have, in different ages, been led into injudicious and mischievous excesses, which have supplied topics of ridicule to the profane and ignorant, while they have awakened the concern and exercised the humility of their Christian brethren. Instances of this second description will occur, I fear, but too easily to every reader. I need only allude to the old Ascetics, the French Quietists, and the followers of Swedenborgh in the North. Each of these is entitled, as a class, to be numbered among real Christians, and all certainly subjected Christianity to some reproach by their departure from the Gospel-standard of spiritual perfection.

Much of the delusion, and many of the errors and irregularities, which ecclesiastical historians have in general too faithfully recorded, would, doubtless, never have occurred, had Christians in every age been more careful to consider and appreciate the character of their Divine Master. The spiritual affections which glowed in his bosom were equally tranquil and energetic; neither breaking forth into wild and ecstatic fervours, nor sinking into contemplative inactivity. Their internal warmth and vigour undoubtedly exceeded all that we can think or speak; yet these appeared, not in the vehèment of his emotions, but in the activity of his benevolence, the constancy of his fortitude, his steady disregard of worldly gratifications, his unconquerable devotion to the service of his Heavenly

Father. Every holy principle knew in him its proper station and office; all acted harmoniously together; and all concurred to form that heavenly temper which was visible in the whole tenor of his ministry, which raised him above the world even while he was in it, and which (from the imperfection perhaps of language) we have no better term to designate, than—*Spiritual-mindedness*.

The followers of Jesus Christ are frequently described in the inspired writings as persons who, in this world, are “strangers and pilgrims,” who have here “no continuing city, but seek one to come.” Spiritual-mindedness is that state of mind which naturally belongs to, and becomes those, who answer to this description; who, knowing that there “remaineth a rest for the people of God,” and deeply feeling its glory and excellence, ardently desire and humbly wait for it. It implies, therefore, a settled and decided preference of heavenly things, the mortification of worldly desires, and the continual growth of those which are spiritual. It is a temper, not an affection. It is fed and cherished by every holy disposition; it embraces and sustains them all.

The spiritual-mindedness of a Christian has but little in common with those contemplative and abstract dispositions which were formerly in considerable credit among the Platonists and Stoics, as well as in one of the principal schools of Indian philosophy. It is natural for men who think and feel deeply, to be dissatisfied with ordinary pleasures,



and to discover the superiority of intellectual to sensitive gratifications ; and some may be expected to arise in every cultivated age who will push these truths a little further, and withdrawing themselves in a considerable measure from the influence of external things, will endeavour to find a higher happiness in the exercise of their reason, or the indulgence of a glowing and creative imagination. It is harsh to speak contemptuously of such practices : the best and highest minds could travel onward but a little way under the darkness of Paganism ; and philosophy, doubtless, was religion to the heathen world. Yet it would be difficult, I believe, to shew, that the masters of ancient wisdom ordinarily attempted more than to ascertain what is the proper perfection of man in his present state. The immortality of the soul was, indeed, an article of faith ; at least in the Academy ; but its future destiny was so enveloped in the shades of a metaphysical mysticism \*, that we cannot easily suppose it to have furnished any motives of action, beyond those which the voice of nature and conscience will supply. Who can be seriously or practically affected by hearing, that after death his spirit shall undergo all sorts of inconceivable lustrations, and finally be absorbed into the Deity ? The extreme ignorance †, too, which universally prevailed, re-

\* See *Somnium Scipionis*, and *Æneid*. Lib. vi.

† Of the general ignorance respecting God we may form some idea, by considering that the Stoics, one of the most learned, most moral, and most respectable sects of antiquity,



specting the nature and character of God, made it impossible, even for the wisest, to venture far into futurity. They could reason with a tolerable degree of certainty on the connection of causes with their consequences, under the existing economy of things; but who could speculate with any confidence as to an ulterior dispensation, without first ascertaining the power, and attributes, and dispositions of Him who can alone ordain it? The Christian, on the contrary, founds his disregard of worldly things, chiefly upon those truths which the Gospel has revealed to us—an acquaintance with the true God, and the assurance of an everlasting rest to all his faithful servants. His improvement and sanctification in this life, he chiefly desires as a becoming tribute of gratitude to his Redeemer, and an indispensable qualification for future happiness. He feels indeed its value even in the midst of infirmity, and blesses God for the meanest pledge of his ultimate perfection; but he knows that its true glory and excellence will then only be ascertained, when the “creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

The prospect of everlasting salvation presented to Christians by the Gospel is so unspeakably glorious and affecting, that it may well excite astonishment, as well as sorrow, to observe how small is its in-

either were Atheists, (as Warburton insists,) or held such a multiplicity of Deities as was scarcely at all removed from the most vulgar superstition. *Vid. Cicero de Nat. Deor. Lib. 2.*

fluence upon mankind, compared with the authority which even a moment's reflection convinces us it ought to possess. Should some angelic company, travelling through the empire of their Creator, arrive for the first time on the confines of our orb; and having gazed awhile on the surrounding objects, be informed, that to the mortal myriads whom they beheld, the gates of everlasting happiness had been opened by their God and Saviour: what do we imagine would be their first feeling? Would they not conclude, even with intuitive rapidity, that the multitudes, whom they saw so busily occupied, were all engaged in preparing themselves for that glorious inheritance, their hearts beating high with hope, and overflowing with grateful adoration? And when, after gazing a little longer, they should ascertain the real anxieties and business and pleasure of men, what, think we, must be the second emotion?

Dim sadness would not spare,  
That day, celestial visages\*.

In truth, the phenomenon is so strange that it admits but of one satisfactory solution; "that man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil†." Were the profane and wicked alone engrossed with worldly concerns, and indisposed to contemplate an inheritance which they neither hope nor desire to possess, it might be a subject of little astonishment.

\* Par. Lost. Lib. 10.

† Articles of Religion, IX.

But what shall we say of that too numerous class of Christians, who believe that they are heirs of Heaven, who trust in the blood of their Redeemer, and yet are as busy with "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life," as if these were their proper portion? Nay, ask the very best, the most holy and experienced servant of his Saviour, and I doubt not he would confess, even with tears, that it is with difficulty he maintains but for a few days an undisturbed and lively perception of heavenly things; that after the most delightful spiritual exercises, full of joy and consolation, a slight temptation, a moderate sorrow, is often sufficient to fill him with distress and perplexity; that he "finds a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, so that he cannot do the things he would\*." Real spirituality of mind is one of the last and highest attainments of the Christian life. Of this truth our own experience ought to have informed us. That it is a prize which deserves every sacrifice, the Apostle surely has determined, in declaring it to be "life and peace."

What then are the most effectual means of ac-

\* This statement seems to be justified by the accounts given, from private documents, in the memoirs of many pious men. There is a letter in Orton's Life of Dr. Doddridge, which is remarkable to this effect; and it is the more valuable, because that excellent man was not only eminent for piety from his early youth, but was naturally of a cheerful disposition, and at all periods of his life peculiarly free from enthusiasm and superstition.

quiring this heavenly temper ; Three chiefly may be noticed : and the first of these is *Prayer*.

The corruption and weakness of our nature, the necessity of spiritual strength, and the efficacy of prayer for obtaining what we need, are truths which can scarcely be said to be known at all to any but Christians, and which certainly are fully and deeply apprehended, only where they have been learned experimentally. “If I were a Christian” (said a noble Lord to Bishop Burnet), “I would *outlive* you all.” The good Bishop might well have answered—“If you were a Christian, you would know yourself better.” How different has been the language of holy men in every age ! “When I was young,” (says the pious and excellent Mr. Newton,) “I thought I should soon obtain the mastery over myself, and arrive at a state of secure and established holiness. But I find that I must go down to my grave a poor unhappy sinner, dependent upon my Saviour for every thing, at the last as at the first\*.”—The great obstacles to spiritual-mindedness (as to every other Christian excellence), are undoubtedly to be found within our own bosoms. They are laid in the deepest recesses of the heart ; inwoven with the essential principles of our nature. He only can subdue them who is the “Lord and Giver of Life ;” and by his power they certainly will be mortified more and more, even

\* I quote from memory, not having the book at hand. The words, probably, are somewhat different ; but the sentiment is the same.



until that day, when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.” Only let us remember what is demanded on our parts as entirely indispensable:—“praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”

The second of the means above alluded to, is a virtue of rare acquirement and very extensive operation—*Self-denial*.

That a manifest moderation in respect to the possessions and pleasures of this life is essential to the Christian character, none probably will be found to deny. Those who have imbibed the spirit of the Gospel know and feel it; and those even, who have little love for practical religion themselves, are generally disposed to exact a very strict measure in this particular from all distinguished Christians: But self-denial is something beyond moderation; this, wisdom has always inculcated; that, is the fruit of Christianity. If the corruption of our nature makes it needful to avoid every incitement to sin, surely the weakness of our nature renders it expedient to reject whatever can enervate our vigour or abate our speed. A luxurious Christian is almost a contradiction in terms; “the good soldier of Christ must endure hardness.” All the images by which our present condition is represented, imply the same truth. We are running a race; we are wrestling for a prize; we are engaged in a conflict. Consider the language of the Holy Scriptures; “If any man will come after me, let him



deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." "Gird up the loins of your mind ; be sober, and hope to the end." "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."—Consider, too, the examples recorded in the New Testament: Our Redeemer was born in a very humble condition ; he travelled on foot through Judea ; he was hungry, and thirsty, and wearied ; he supped and lodged with poor cottagers ; "he pleased not himself." St. Paul was a tent-maker, and wrought at his profession. He indulged no vanities, he desired no delicacies, he accumulated no riches ; but "approved himself as a minister of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses." Now these things were doubtless recorded for our instruction ; not, indeed that we should all exactly copy the models, but certainly that we should catch their Spirit. However, let the measure of indulgence, which is consistent with something of real religion, be determined as it may, the whole analogy of things, as well as the language of Revelation, clearly indicates, that much spirituality of mind can hardly be maintained without habitual self-denial: Great blessings are always purchased by considerable sacrifices. This is the order of nature, which the will of our Creator ordained, and which Christianity assuredly does not "destroy, but fulfil."

There is yet one more condition, which is manifestly indispensable to real spiritual-mindedness—*Essential Holiness*. "Blessed are the pure in

heart, for they shall see God." Now purity of heart is nearly synonymous with that singleness or simplicity of purpose which our Maker, in his word, unceasingly and urgently demands from all his creatures. In the language of inspiration, the heart is considered as polluted by pride, vanity, ambition, selfishness, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, and the like, as certainly, and as fatally, as by the tyranny of fleshly appetites. To be pure in heart, is to have but one purpose, desire, and motive for all our actions—the approbation of our Heavenly Father; to be devoted to his service; to live to his glory. It is in the exercise of this disposition, proving its reality by its fruits, that Spiritual-mindedness is chiefly to be acquired. In truth, it is so nearly allied to it, that whatever other Christian graces may exist independently of each other, neither of these, I am persuaded, will ever be found in separation.

It remains only to say something of the advantages and the blessings which belong to the temper of mind which we have been considering.

It is justly observed by Dr. Witherspoon\*, that although temptations are for the most part external, their power of seducing us into sin arises almost entirely from the evil dispositions within our own bosoms. That state of the heart, then, is surely above all others happy, upon which the ordinary allurements of this world can exercise but little

\* Sermons. On the Deceitfulness of Sin.

power; of which (if the image may be employed without presumption)

th' æthereal mould,  
 Incapable of stain, doth soon expel  
 Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire  
 Victorious\*.

This is the blessed privilege of spiritual-mindedness. It neutralizes the power of temptation, as some natures are said to be fortified against the most penetrating poisons; and it renders easy and delightful the practice of every virtue. If "our treasure be really in heaven," and the affections habitually fixed upon an everlasting inheritance, the common solicitations of sense, of vanity, and of interest, will necessarily lose their influence. Their attraction becomes too feeble to be felt; or if it sometimes occasion a momentary deviation, the irregularity is soon corrected by the steady force and commanding energy of a far mightier principle. Let us reflect but a few moments on the nature of our sins. What is pride? A predominant desire of superiority. What is covetousness? A prevailing anxiety for wealth. What is ambition? A thirst after power. If neither eminence, nor riches, nor authority, appear valuable, must not the corresponding appetites perish? Or, descending to lower offences, will he be intemperate, who de-

\* Paradise Lost, Lib. ii.

spises transient gratifications? Will he be vain, who values not the applause of his fellow-creatures? Will he be peevish, angry, or irritable, who sits loose to every earthly comfort, and “counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord?” It would be easy to travel thus through the whole circle of sins and infirmities; but the journey is tedious and disagreeable. It would be easy too, and far more pleasing to trace the blessed influence of real spirituality of mind in cherishing with a holy warmth, and drawing forth into activity and fruitfulness, every principle of excellence. But this too would require some space, and the testimony of St. Paul is full and satisfactory: “The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.”

But Spiritual-mindedness has its blessings as well as its advantages; if indeed, it be possible to distinguish between them, for “each is either.”

When our Redeemer was about to withdraw from this world, what was the legacy he bequeathed to his desolate and afflicted followers? Was it power, to exalt them above their enemies;—was it wealth, to supply them with worldly gratifications;—was it even sagacity or knowledge, with all their



attendant blessings? "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." This is the secret treasure of the Christian life; this is the peculiar blessing of Spiritual-mindedness. The world is full of vehement desires, and eager competitions; the faculties of the mind driven forward by its passions, and purveying to their gratification. In the progress of earthly prosperity, we are continually advancing from comparative stillness and tranquillity, into a busy and tempestuous region. As riches increase, and honours multiply, our projects become more extensive, our enemies more numerous, our contests more severe, our anxieties ceaseless and consuming. And often in the more public and exalted scenes of life, the storm still grows louder and louder, even to the day when the hand of death arrests us, and we sink and are forgotten. Far different is the path of Christian perfection. Darkened perhaps at first, with clouds of perplexity and temptation, the pilgrim looks round with a trembling anxiety, and treads even the way of salvation with some heaviness. But the light which shone faintly and fitfully for a time, becomes gradually clear and steady. As he ascends towards the celestial Paradise, leaving behind him the damps and darkness, the din and tumult of this lower world, his prospect is still growing more extensive and delightful, the region more tranquil, the atmosphere he breathes more æthereal:



From pure now purer air  
 Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires  
 Vernal delight and joy, able to drive  
 All sadness\*.

The progress of a Christian is not only "from strength to strength," but from anxiety to a peaceful serenity, from doubt to confidence, from restlessness to repose. A growing acquaintance with the dispensations of God, and an increasing experience of his goodness, open upon the soul such extensive views of the wisdom and bounty of our Creator; such a lively perception of his astonishing mercy and long-suffering, of his amazing condescension, his ceaseless care, his inexhaustible kindness; that all the uneasy doubts respecting the character of his providence, which a first view of things is apt to excite in reflective minds, are swallowed up and lost. They are not so much explained, as swept away and annihilated. When the heart is fixed on heavenly things, and the affections, weaned from earthly gratifications, rest on the Creator as their proper object and "exceeding great reward," the soul quickly experiences a tranquillity and composure which "this world can neither give nor take away;" a cheerful and heavenly serenity, which seems as it were, a prelibation of future happiness, an earnest of our final and everlasting rest. It is the privilege and reward of Spiritual-mindedness: and although doubtless, to the best, often disturbed

\* Paradise Lost, lib. iv.

by the trials and sufferings of humanity, it is a treasure, of which no experienced Christian can doubt the reality, or which he would consent to relinquish for the most brilliant and envied glare of worldly prosperity.

But although the blessedness which belongs to spirituality of mind is of such a character, that it can never be unsuitable or ineffective to whatever circumstances it is applied; although it can impart its joys and consolations to every age, station, and condition of life; affliction, which most needs its presence, seems, by a beautiful arrangement, to be its natural and favoured element. There it brightens to its full lustre, and shines in perfect beauty.

Calista was born of pious parents, and early imbibed, from their lessons and examples, the best principles of Christianity. These gradually matured with her understanding; and in the midst of friendship and domestic happiness, life seemed to be opening upon her with unclouded brightness. Calista was entering on her nineteenth year, when she was suddenly attacked by an alarming epidemic disorder. Its violence soon exhausted itself, and she revived: but the functions of life were fatally disturbed, and the vigour of her constitution annihilated. She lived indeed, during several years; but life was little more than a protracted disease, tending slowly to its consummation. Thus, as it were in an instant, at that period when both our powers and our expectations of enjoyment are ge-

nerally the most lively, the face of nature was suddenly obscured, and a funeral pall was thrown over the whole of her earthly existence. All the bright visions that play before a young imagination, the day-dreams of hope, that please and occupy, even while they deceive us, were for her at once blotted out. The delighted and delightful activity of youthful gaiety—the animated pleasures of social intercourse—the endearments of conjugal tenderness—she was forbid to share. Surely, under such privations, her spirit quickly sunk into a deep and settled sadness! Far otherwise. The gay and sprightly vivacity of her early years was succeeded by a gentle serenity, which silently took possession of her bosom. Her eye no longer sparkled with rapture; her countenance was lighted up no more in radiant happiness: yet a gleam of softened joy was shed upon her features, and an expression, dearer even than beauty, of love, resignation, and thankfulness, spoke the sunshine of a pure and angel spirit. Her sufferings, though great, appeared but little to distress, and scarcely at all to occupy her. Those who saw her only occasionally, did not immediately discover that she was ill; and they who were constantly with her, would hardly have perceived it, if her faint voice and feeble step had not too clearly indicated what no impatient or querulous emotion ever betrayed. It was only a few weeks before her death, that, to a friend who inquired after a sick relative, she spoke of the state of his improvement with a sensible delight; and, being

at length obliged to say something of her own health, alluded to it slightly, with that unaffected ease, which shewed that she considered it only as a subject of very secondary interest. At length the symptoms of her disorder began to assume a decisive character; her pains increased, and her strength diminished.—At the visible approach of death, the feebleness of her nature trembled. Of acute feelings, quickened by disease to an agonizing sensibility, she was unable to anticipate the pangs of dissolution without experiencing a silent terror, which she in vain struggled to conceal. Her friends beheld the conflict, and wept in secret. They had no power to sustain her weakness, nor any council to impart, which her own piety and experience had not rendered familiar to her. The struggle continued, and increased till the second day before her death—and then it ceased for ever! What passed within her bosom at that hour, what blessed consolation descended to her from above, He only knows who sees her soul; but, from that time, anxiety and terror fled away; even her bodily sufferings appeared to be suspended, and a smile of heavenly gladness animated her countenance. She could converse but little, for nature was nearly exhausted; yet she cheered with the accents of piety and affection those who were gathered round her. She remembered every one that was dear to her, and distributed little mementos of her love and gratitude. She listened with tranquil devotion to the sacred offices of the Church, and partook of the

memorials of that blessed Sacrifice to which alone she trusted for acceptance. She sunk softly into a gentle slumber, and slept, to awake no more! Her parents followed her to the grave, shed over the tears of mingled thankfulness and affliction, and marked with a simple stone the turf that lies lightly on her.

There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow ;  
 There the first roses of the year shall blow ;  
 And angels, with their silver wings, o'ershade  
 The ground now sacred by thy relics made \*.

\* Pope's Elegy.



## ON THANKFULNESS.

1813.

THE seat of religion is the heart. External actions, whether ceremonial or moral, though the natural expression and proper evidence of our real sentiments, are religious only because they are allied to dispositions and feelings that essentially are so. From them they flow; to them they are indebted for their true and distinctive character. So that, although there is not any difficulty in imagining a person deeply spiritual, though by sickness or otherwise he may be incapable of expressing his feelings visibly, it is a mere extravagance and absolute contradiction to speak of one whose life is religious, while his heart is alienated from God. This truth, though it appears obvious, is of such general application and importance, that it can hardly be too frequently repeated. It is this which an eminent writer of the present day\* doubtless intended to enforce, when she said, that "Christianity is a religion of principles." It is this which has induced the most valuable of our practical writers to enter deeply into the examination of the spiritual

\* Mrs. H. More.

affections, of the secret and internal operations of religion in the heart.

Nor is the knowledge of these things involved in doubt or mystery. Christianity addresses indeed the most vital principles of our nature: her energy penetrates even to the deepest springs of human action: yet the affections which Religion claims, and the active exercise of which constitutes her perfection and triumph, are all natural affections. Hope and fear, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, are passions so intimately allied to our constitution, that they may be said to form a part of our existence; and even from our earliest years they have been so continually in exercise, that the dullest and most ignorant are as well acquainted with them as the profoundest inquirer into human nature. These however are the affections which, engaged in the service of Religion, become the elements of true holiness. Whatever therefore be the mystery implied in those powerful images, in which man is described as regenerated and created anew by the agency of the Spirit of God, it is evident that they do not involve any practical difficulty. The change is certainly radical and complete, perhaps not perfectly to be understood by us in its deepest and essential energy; but the effects and evidences of that change are of a nature so intelligible, that the weakest faculties are sufficient to apprehend them. All know what their affections are; and all are capable of discovering to what objects they are principally directed.

It is worthy of observation, (though it may appear digressive,) that although some of the affections upon which Religion operates, are, in their lively exercise, exceedingly distressing, they are not those to which Religion has any natural or permanent alliance. Fear and grief are doubtless painful; when powerfully excited, they are the sources of the deepest affliction; but fear and grief, speaking correctly, constitute no part of Religion. She is acquainted with them only as grief for sin, and fear of condemnation. They are but as visitants in her kingdom. In heaven they have no place. Their residence is chiefly fixed in that land of mourning which separates the realms of light from the dominions of guilt and misery. Religion, in her perfect state, nay, even in that maturity which sometimes has been attained in this life, knows only affections and feelings which are essentially delightful. Love, joy, hope, gratitude, are always sources of gratification. In their best and highest exercise they are the springs of happiness refined, exalted, and ineffable.

Among the religious affections, I know not how any can better deserve an attentive consideration than **THANKFULNESS**.

Yet it is most strange, if in a world so full of wonders any thing can justly be called strange, that a creature should ever need to be reminded of the duty of gratitude to his Creator. Our very instincts tell us, that to be unthankful even to an earthly benefactor is the mark of a low and unworthy spirit.

What must be the guilt then of unthankfulness to Him, who, from the first hour of our existence, has been engaged in an unceasing course of mercy and kindness towards us ; whose bounty began before we could even conceive from whom it flowed ; and has been continued to us through many years of indifference, disobedience, and ingratitude on our parts ? There is scarcely any point of view in which the universal corruption of human nature is so visible as this. The very best are cold ; willing to enjoy their blessings, yet in danger lest that very enjoyment should make them forget the Giver. And a large part of mankind have in every age consumed the bounties of Providence in the most stupid selfishness, utterly careless of any thing but how to renew and increase their own gratifications. The wrath of Heaven was poured forth upon the heathen world, because “ when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful :” and it is evident from the numerous and pathetic passages in the Prophetic Writings, wherein the Almighty condescends to plead with his people, reminding them of his early covenant and long-continued mercies, that, of all their varied offences an hardened and heartless ingratitude was the most condemning.

The truth is (and there are few truths more important), that the foundation of all thankfulness is laid in humility. A proud man never thinks himself obliged ; and men being by nature proud, or at least exceedingly disposed to become so, are then



only affected with a grateful sense of the goodness of their Creator, when his spirit has touched their hearts, and taught them something of their real unworthiness. A hearty thankfulness to God is, perhaps, one of the most decisive evidences of a soul truly regenerate; and the most vigorous state of this grace will, I believe, always be found allied to the highest advances in holiness.

It is indeed very curious, and highly instructive, to observe, how different are the effects produced upon the minds of men by the dispensations of Providence; and to watch the secret principles of the heart, manifesting themselves in the sentiments which they express. We know of men, who, in later years, have rejected Christianity as a forgery too flagrant to deceive any enlightened understanding. Several of these, as Hume, Frederick, Voltaire, D'Alembert, Diderot, and others, have passed their lives, upon the whole, in much comfort and satisfaction, sharing largely of the blessings bestowed upon us, and exempted from most of the severer calamities to which we are exposed. Do their writings breathe a spirit of affectionate gratitude to the Giver of all their enjoyments? They are almost uniformly destitute of any thankful acknowledgments, and not unfrequently polluted with profane and audacious impeachments of the wisdom and goodness of their Creator: in the midst of happiness they arraigned his Providence. And now contemplate a very difficult spectacle, not less real, but to every well constituted mind far less melancholy.



Look at the humble and suffering Christian, stretched upon the bed of sickness, and about to be separated, by an unexpected and mysterious dispensation, from the objects of his tenderest affection. Disease of body and anguish of heart are united to overwhelm him. He sees before him nothing in this world but agony and death. Around him are assembled those in whose happiness his own was involved; whose welfare has been the subject of his daily prayer and nightly meditation; whom he hoped to have trained up to everlasting glory by his instructions and example. He must shortly be torn from them in the midst of his years, and leave them in a rude and ensnaring world, exposed to sufferings and temptations from which his parental watchfulness can no longer protect them. Yet, in all his affliction, his faith is still unshaken; his countenance is still animated with a smile of holy confidence; and his heart still glows with gratitude and love to his Almighty Benefactor. Such, in every age, according to the measure of their grace, have been the faithful servants of a crucified Saviour. Such more eminently was one\* whose untimely loss many of us have lately deplored; the memory of whose wisdom and piety this writer delights to cherish; and to whose honoured name he consecrates, with a mournful satisfaction, this humble tribute of veneration and affection.

The motives to Christian thankfulness are as nu-

\* The Rev. John Venn, late Rector of Clapham.

merous as the mercies we enjoy, the dangers from which we have been rescued, and the blessed hopes which are presented to us. But, as in an extensive prospect, we select some commanding features in connection with which the lesser objects may be surveyed more advantageously, let us confine our attention at present to three topics, in each of which the great bounty and goodness of God are more remarkably visible.

And first and chiefest, as the most high and ineffable manifestation of the Divine love, the foundation and the seal of all our blessings, let us consider for a moment that stupendous dispensation, the gift of the only begotten Son of God; who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. In the contemplation of this astonishing transaction, the mind will sometimes stagger as under a weight too vast for its weakness; and in a mingled transport of joy, and fear, and wonder, we are ready to exclaim, "Are these things so?" But shall we doubt the possibility of an event, only because it proves the love of God to transcend the height of our conceptions? Shall we imagine, that He who is incomprehensible in his wisdom, can be less infinite and immeasurable in the most excellent of all his attributes? Let us rather yield to the full tide of feeling, in the grateful reception of this inestimable blessing. To a sinner, deeply humbled under the sense of his offences, the knowledge of a Redeemer is unspeakably precious; it is as the sounds of the seraphic choirs that first break upon

the disembodied spirit. And the deeper our views become (as, if we advance in holiness, they will continually become deeper), of the evil of sin and the magnitude of our past and daily offences, the more sensibly shall we feel the extent of that goodness which has provided an atonement so infinite in value. Humiliation and self-abasement will be almost identified with faith and love to an Almighty Saviour; so true is it in the Gospel dispensation, that while we seem to sink we are indeed ascending, and become poor in spirit only that we may be rich in faith. Above all things, let us not receive with coldness this "unspeakable gift." To be a little thankful for the greatest of all blessings, and faintly affected with that exhibition of the Divine beneficence which has filled the highest created intelligences with adoration and wonder, seems, if possible, to be a greater affront to our Heavenly Benefactor than the entire rejection of his bounty. The Christian will endeavour unceasingly, by prayer, by contemplation, by the penitent recollection of past offences, by a watchful observance of daily failings, by the sense of present help, by the hope of future glory, by all the resources of nature and all the means of grace, to rally his spirits and renew his strength, that he may appreciate with an ever-growing sensibility this great manifestation of the loving-kindness of his Maker, the highest evidence of his goodness, and the pledge of his promised mercies. If the pressure of his own distresses, or sympathy for the sufferings of others, should for

a moment disturbed his more settled convictions, he will fly for consolation to that amazing truth, that He, whose power and wisdom and happiness are ineffable, “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” The pomps, the riches, the honours of this life are for those who desire them. Ours be the language of the Apostle; “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” For “we know that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from our vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.” And “worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

If there be any thing which can awaken our gratitude in a measure at all comparable with the riches of the mercy of God in the great mystery of redemption, surely it is the long-suffering and condescension which he has exhibited in all his dealings towards us. Who are we that we should be regarded by the Most Highest?

Transgressors from the womb,  
And hasting to a grave.

We are born in weakness; we are reared with difficulty; we are supported with sustenance day by



day like the meanest animal in creation ; and every night we must submit to the suspension of our faculties for many hours, that we may enjoy them with any tolerable comfort during those which remain. And yet, in truth, our condition as animals is that of which we have the least reason to be ashamed. It is the perversion and depravation of those powers which were bestowed on us for the noblest purposes, which is the proper subject of abasement. How have our hearts been alienated from God, and carried away by the most foolish vanities ! How have our understandings been exercised to advance every earthly project, while the highest knowledge and only true wisdom were little regarded ! I do not speak of flagrant enormities, they carry with them their own condemnation. But is there one among us, even the best, who will venture to hope, that, in the course of a long life, he ever passed a single hour which could be perfectly acceptable to his Maker ? Yet amidst all our sins and all our infirmities, who is it that has fed, and clothed, and sustained, and cherished us ? Who protected our infancy, and guided our youth, and blessed our maturer years ? Who raised us from the bed of sickness, and shielded us from a thousand dangers ? We are apt to indulge high fancies of our importance, but let any one impartially consider this simple question : Why was I thus preserved ? I had offended against my Maker from my earliest years ; and he knew that I should dishonour him by multiplied transgressions, and even in my best



days be an unprofitable servant. I had nothing to recommend me to his favour, nor was the continuance of my guilty being of the smallest possible moment for his glory or happiness. "The wages of sin is death" and my sins have been more than I can number. Why was I thus preserved? But life is the least of the blessings which we owe to the condescension and long-suffering of our God. He pitied us in our wretched and desperate condition, and opened our eyes to see the light of his Gospel. He turned our hearts to obey his will, and made us to taste of the blessedness of his service. He bore with all our provocations, and pardoned our constant ingratitude; and when we had rebelled wilfully against him, he sought us, and brought us back, and revived again the vital warmth which was almost extinguished in our bosoms. He chastened us for our iniquities, that we might remember and sin no more; and in the midst of suffering he cheered and comforted our drooping spirits; and in every situation and under every vicissitude he has been with us and blessed us, and taught our trembling steps to move in the right path, and raised our hearts to love his will, and understand his righteousness, and hope for his glory. Is there in the universe an understanding so perverse, that it can hear these things, and not acknowledge the loving kindness of the Lord? Is there a heart so insensible, that it can consider them, and still be unthankful?

There is yet another cause for gratitude which

will ever be cherished with peculiar feeling by all who have the happiness in any measure to experience it. Are we sensible, can we entertain an humble hope, that, through the directing and vital influence of the Spirit of God, we have made some advances in holiness, and are daily more and more “transformed by the renewing of our minds, to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God?” Undoubtedly the best will always entertain the deepest sense of their own unworthiness, and be slow to be convinced that they have made any considerable progress in the Christian life. But no one, who is diligent to watch the motions of his soul can be wholly ignorant of the changes which are wrought in it, whether for good or evil; and the deep anxiety which is felt by every advanced Christian to be entirely conformed to the image of his Saviour, will make him recognize, with the most lively sensibility and thankfulness, every, even the smallest indication of spiritual improvement. It is evident, from the writings of St. Paul, that the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit on his heart were the subject of his continual rejoicing and gratitude. He knew them; he spoke of them; not in the language of exultation or complacency, but in the deepest self-abasement, recognizing and adoring the unmerited mercies of his God. How should it be otherwise? Can we receive the best gifts of our Heavenly Father without even knowing that he bestows them? Can his power be exerted in its most glorious operations, yet leave no distinctive

traces of its energy? But the very supposition excludes the idea of a sinful elation of mind. Humility is the unfailing companion of true sanctification. And consider what it is that sanctification implies. It implies the reduction or discipline of all our appetites; the expulsion of every unkind and resentful passion; the exile of pride and vanity; the mortification of all those affections by which we are powerfully attracted towards the pleasures, the honours, and vain gratifications of this life. It implies the communication of faith and holy fortitude; the diffusion through the soul of every generous, gentle, and affectionate disposition; and such a constant growth in the knowledge and love of God, as shall make us to delight continually more and more in the performance of his will and the contemplation of his perfections; "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The greatest blessings naturally awaken the deepest thankfulness; and what are the blessings which, singly, or in union, can be compared with deliverance from the slavery of sin and the communication of a Divine nature? The Christian must feel them, and feeling he must rejoice with grateful adoration. But his gratitude will be rooted in the deepest humility; and he will ever delight to abase himself that he may glorify his Heavenly Benefactor.

And yet, after all, something must be allowed to human infirmity. For the present, we are unavoidably conversant with earthly things; and these by their frequent recurrence, as well as from the imperfection of our nature, will, especially in early life, very considerably affect our happiness. It is a matter, therefore, both of wisdom and duty, to accustom ourselves habitually to consider not only our chief spiritual privileges and mercies, but also our ordinary temporal enjoyments, as flowing from the bounty of God; that the idea of his beneficence may be associated with the whole system of life, and a perpetual spring of thankfulness be cherished in our bosoms. More especially if there are any blessings peculiarly dear to us, to which our thoughts are often involuntarily directed, and which have acquired, by their excellence, a just pre-eminence in our affections, it is highly necessary that we connect them, by pious reflections and frequent aspirations of gratitude, with the great Author of all things. Whatever they are, from him undoubtedly they proceed, and by his mercy only are they preserved to us. In themselves they are but vanity; short in their duration, uncertain in their continuance, and even dangerous in proportion to the ascendancy they acquire over us. Contemplated as *his* gifts, they assume in some measure a sacred character; they render the exercise of a thankful piety familiar and delightful; and connecting themselves with hopes and prospects beyond the grave, instead of drawing down the soul to this world, the

scene of their infancy, they raise it by an easy flight to those better regions, where happiness shall know neither interruption nor anxiety, is without alloy and without end. The image of our Maker, which, seen in its own glory, appears almost too bright for our weakness, when reflected from the blessings which he has given us, assumes a gracious, benign, and endearing aspect ; we acquire the power and the habit of committing whatever is most dear to us with a cheerful faith to his parental providence ; and see, in his perfect wisdom and goodness, the source, the security, and the consummation of all our happiness.

Enough has been said of the *motives* to thankfulness : let us now consider the *blessedness* which attends it.

It is certainly the highest excellence of this grace, and that which ought to constitute its greatest value in our eyes, that we know it to be peculiarly acceptable to God. Other privileges belong to it, and well deserve our admiration ; but this is its real glory. For God is the only true fountain of honour, and his approbation the only unquestionable test of perfection. Deep, constant, fervent thankfulness, has been in every age the service which he has asked, and which his saints have delighted to render. It is a free-will offering, the homage of the heart, better than the most costly sacrifices and oblations. It is a spiritual exercise, the proper worship of a spiritual religion. It is the language of the Church on earth ; “ Bless the Lord, O house



of Israel ; bless the Lord, O house of Aaron." It is the language of the holy and elect spirits in heaven ; " And all the angels stood round about the throne, saying, Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Among the incidental advantages which belong to a holy gratitude, one of the most valuable is, that it cherishes a religion full of cheerfulness and hope. It is impossible that we should be habitually exercised in thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his innumerable blessings, without acquiring a certain joyfulness and elasticity of spirit. It is impossible that we should frequently exercise ourselves in contemplating the past mercies of God, without seeing in them the pledges of his future bounty. Both these blessed dispositions are directly opposed to that despondency, which in seasons of temptation or distress will sometimes come over us like a thick cloud, filling the mind with fearful and boding visions ; and this surely is a temper very unfavourable to advancement in holiness. We cannot, it is true, be too earnest to " flee from the wrath to come ;" we cannot too deeply feel the dangers of unrepented sin ; we cannot be too distrustful of our own most infirm and evil nature ; but we may easily be, and generally we are, far too diffident of the power and faithfulness of God ; far too insensible of his unspeakable mercy, and pity, and loving-kindness, and of the exceeding great salvation which he has wrought for us. There is something in a low, me-

lancholy, querulous religion, that seems peculiarly unworthy of our great and bounteous Benefactor, peculiarly unsuitable to the freedom of the Gospel grace; and frustrating one of the blessed ends for which the glad tidings of salvation were published abroad. It is certainly not inconsistent with a genuine piety; but it must be confessed to be the very contrast of that generous, animated, and faithful spirit which breathes through the writings of St. Paul, and which appears to be characteristic of Christianity. For “we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The Almighty Creator and Governor of all things, is no longer, as he once was, “a God that hideth himself.” We see him not like the heathen world through the mists of a guilty darkness “full of sighs and sounds of woe;” not even as the Jew, behind the veil of a condemning Law and a severe ritual, “the ministration of death.” Blessed be his holy name and the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus, we know him such as he essentially is; the God of love; “the God of hope;” “the God of peace;” “the God of patience and consolation;” “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” “He hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” “Old things are passed away, all things are become new.” “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ Jesus.” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall

tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Nearly allied to the blessing which was last mentioned, and in some measure growing out of it, is another not less valuable. An habitual thankfulness to God is naturally, I believe inseparably, connected with a spirit of kindness and affection towards men. Indeed, it is not easy to understand how it should be otherwise. A frequent consideration of the unmerited mercies of God towards us cannot but exceedingly humble and soften the spirit. At the same time the contemplation of the divine goodness, so free, so unwearied, so constantly tending to the advancement of the general happiness, accustoms the mind to noble and generous thoughts, to images of order, beauty, and beneficence, which gradually take possession of the soul. It is finely imagined by our great epic poet, that when Satan, in the midst of his evil designs, beheld the lovely bowers of Paradise, and Eve in “graceful innocence” moving among them, he forgot his wicked purposes, for a moment transported and subdued :—

That space the evil one abstracted stood  
 From his own evil, and for the time remain'd  
 Stupidly good, of enmity disarm'd,  
 Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge.

Milton well knew the tendency of the human heart to assimilate itself to surrounding objects, to catch the spirit, and partake the temper, of the scenes which are most familiar to us. In the cultivation and exercise of thankfulness, the soul is habitually directed to God: we live as it were in his presence, surveying the visible expressions of his goodness, and enjoying an increasing sense of his adorable perfections. Is it possible that in the midst of the images thus presented to us, our hearts awakened to gratitude and astonishment at the comprehensive love of our great Benefactor, a sour, selfish, suspicious temper should prevail in our bosoms? It cannot be: the ideas have no affinity; they are incapable of being united. Never yet did a churlish spirit really love God. Never was a spring of holy and grateful affection opened in the soul, without diffusing itself in a full and flowing stream of beneficence upon every surrounding object.

If such then are the motives of spiritual thankfulness, and such the blessings which attend it, can we be too earnest to cultivate a grace so highly becoming our condition, and so eminently distinguished by the favour of our Maker! Let us not however forget, that how powerful soever are the considerations which excite us to gratitude, how efficacious

soever an habitual contemplation of the mercies and bounty of God, there is ONE alone, who, in this as in every other branch of the Divine life, worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." He is the great agent; nor are his operations the less certain or direct, because they are generally concurrent with the constitution of nature, and move in perfect harmony with the laws of his own creation. To him, then, let us "bow our knees," with the Apostle, in fervent and continual prayer, "that he would give us according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God?"

Let us also constantly recollect, that if we are really filled with thankfulness to our Heavenly Father, it will be expressed in the manner which he has prescribed as the proper evidence of our feelings: "We shall shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," said our Redeemer, "he it is that loveth me." This is the only sure pledge of gratitude; every other is equivocal, and may deceive us. For gratitude, like affection, does not chiefly consist in



strong emotions, which may be the effect only of a lively sensibility ; but in that settled temper of mind which disposes us with our whole hearts to do and to be whatever is most acceptable to our Benefactor. The faithfulness of our service proves the reality of our feelings ; the delight with which it is rendered is the measure of their depth and ardour. And it is only an evil heart that can find no pleasure in receiving obligations. To a mind renewed by the Spirit of God, and touched with a true sense of his bounty, it is the highest gratification to behold in every blessing the expression of his parental kindness, and to cherish them as the pledges of his un-failing and everlasting mercy. In such a temper the service of our Maker is felt to be what it is undoubtedly—" perfect freedom." Obedience is no longer a condition ; it is a privilege ; not the means of happiness, but happiness itself. And thus the proof of our thankfulness becomes also its reward : God, in his great wisdom and goodness, having so provided that the very acknowledgment of his mercies should be the occasion of increasing them, and the circle of his goodness and of our enjoyment be for ever enlarging.

## ON PRAYER.

1813.

AMONG the circumstances which are peculiarly characteristic of the followers of Jesus Christ, none is more frequently mentioned, or insisted upon more steadily by the Apostolic writers, than this—that they “walk by faith and not by sight.” The various graces, whose harmonious union constitutes the perfection to which we aspire, may be possessed by Christians in different degrees according to their advances in holiness. But of the whole body of believers it is uniformly assumed in the New Testament, that in accepting the Redeemer they have renounced the world; that they are dead to present things, and maintain, in their sentiments and actions, an habitual regard to those invisible relations and that higher inheritance to which they are introduced under the Christian economy. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Yet it must be acknowledged, to a being such as man, the life of faith is not of easy attainment.

We are endowed with senses admirably constructed to perceive and enjoy the objects which surround us ; and the pleasures of which we are thus capable are easy and natural, endeared to us by early familiarity, always present, and generally attainable without much painful exertion of our strength or faculties. Invisible things strike but faintly upon the mind, and the impression is easily effaced by the intrusion of other images : they are distant ; they appear to be uncertain ; and, though manifestly of a noble and superior nature, they are better fitted at first to awaken our admiration than excite our desires. To a person accustomed to taste largely of the gratifications of life, the simple truths of Christianity are seldom therefore a welcome message. Like the young man in the Gospel, he goes away very sorrowful, because he has great possessions.

But God, who knows and pities our weakness, in appointing the end to be attained has not forgotten to supply the means of attaining it. Our strength is plainly insufficient for the undertaking : it could not support us in innocence, how should it recover us from depravity ! God alone is able to deliver us from our natural bondage ; to awaken our souls from the slumber of sin and death ; to disenchant the world which has so long deceived us. The ransom which was necessary He supplied ; and He has established settled methods for the communication of Divine strength to those who sincerely desire to obtain it. For this end, the higher faculties of the soul are called into his service ; dispen-

sations are supplied to awaken and instruct us ; the word of truth is published ; ordinances are instituted ; and the means of grace appointed. But above all, the privilege and duty of Prayer are revealed to every repenting sinner ; and the faithfulness of God is pledged, that He will “ give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask him!*”

Easier terms surely never were proposed for the attainment of any blessing. Should an illustrious prince, or an affectionate father, or a generous and faithful friend, invite us to come to him that he might impart some special bounty, should we churlishly refuse? Should we not anticipate with joy the approaching hour, and count the moments till it arrived? And shall we turn away from the Father of all mercies when he calls us into his presence ; and refuse, by the highest of all privileges, to purchase the greatest of all blessings?

Prayer is undoubtedly the first of all the means of grace ; and it has this peculiar dignity and blessing, that it brings us before the Throne of God himself ; into the presence of Him, whom to see and love is the highest happiness of the hishest created beings. It was once the happiness of man. But sin too soon separated him from his Maker, and spreading like a noxious vapour, blotted out the very sun from heaven. From that fatal hour the whole human race wandered about in blindness and error, “ fettered with the bonds of a long night, and exiled from the eternal providence.” The right or the duty of Prayer,

though it may be probably inferred from the visible dispensations of God; is by no means a certain truth of natural religion. To the children of Israel it was communicated by revelation; to us it has been proclaimed and enjoined by the Son of God himself. And blessed for ever and ever be his holy Name, who brought down the message of reconciliation and peace!

For though we fled him angry, yet recalled  
 To life prolonged and promised grace we now  
 Gladly behold though but the distant skirts  
 Of glory; and far off his steps adore\*.

The approach to God, and introduction to spiritual perceptions, which are effected by Prayer, seem; as it were, the connecting link between earth and Heaven; between that state of distance and separation from the Creator, to which as sinners we must still submit, and those blessed privileges which we shall hereafter share in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father. In the blessed exercises of a spiritual devotion, the soul is borne away for a time from all the perishable objects of sense, to appear in the very sanctuary of God; there to learn what the voice of man can never teach, to feel what the profane and thoughtless never can appreciate. "The Christian loves to lie low before the footstool of his Creator†;" and from that blessed presence he returns with a heart so humbled yet so refreshed, that

\* Par. Lost.

† Robt. Hall. Sermon on Infidelity.



like Peter in the Mount, he feels "it was good for him to be there." Earthly vanity has lost its charm, and earthly greatness its splendour; and though the business and cares of life may a little damp the ardour of his spirits, he will still be conscious of a secret unfailing and heavenly energy, which he drank in with "the water of life, that proceedeth out of the Throne of God, and of the Lamb."

It cannot then be matter of astonishment to find, that many of those who have been the most eminent for activity and usefulness in secular concerns, have been remarkable also for the depth of their piety, and the consecration of what appears a large proportion of their time to religious offices. It is impossible to read the accounts which have been transmitted to us of Alfred, without feeling amazed at the variety of affairs—military, civil, commercial, judicial, and literary—which his comprehensive genius embraced and transacted. The secret of his prodigious exertions seems to be given in the following extract from a writer equally impartial and able\*: "Religion, which in Alfred's father was so prejudicial to his affairs, without being in him at all inferior in its zeal and fervour, was of a more enlarged and noble kind. Far from being a prejudice to his government, it seems to have been the principle which supported him in so many fatigues, and fed like an abundant source his civil and military virtues. To his religious exercises and studies he

\* Mr. Burke. Abridgment of English History.

devoted a full third part of his time."—Boerhaave was illustrious, in a later age, and in a more limited sphere of action, for his extensive scientific researches combined with a laborious professional practice. To a friend who inquired of him how he could unite pursuits so contradictory, and at the same time support, with an equanimity almost peculiar to himself, the numberless provocations and affronts to which he was unfortunately subjected; he replied, that he attributed his strength and cheerfulness, to the habit of devoting one full hour every morning to secret prayer. Martin Luther lived during many years in a perpetual storm of conflict, controversy, and danger; persecuted by the vengeance of his enemies, harassed by the imprudences or defection of his friends, unavoidably engaged in extensive political connections and correspondences; burthened with the weight of a new unsettled and struggling religion. Amidst the countless occupations and distractions incident to such a situation, his life continually threatened, his health occasionally failing, his hopes frequently disappointed and at times almost desperate, he maintained the cause of God with the most unconquerable energy; and, though sometimes hurried into excesses by the vehemence of his nature, conducted it, in the main, through difficulty and peril, from its weak and tottering infancy to its triumphant establishment, with consummate ability and wisdom. His learned and pious Historian\* has sufficiently explained whence

\* The very Rev. the Dean of Carlisle.

he derived the powers required to support such prodigious exertions, by informing us, that the great Reformer regularly employed three of the best hours of every day in the exercises of devotion.—Indeed, it is scarcely necessary to refer to any ordinary examples, when we recollect that even He “to whom the Spirit was given without measure” would retire from the multitudes that followed him, and though fatigued with the labours of his daily ministry, employed whole nights in prayer. In the midst of danger and distresses, David sought the Lord and was succoured; under the burthen of guilt, he poured out his soul before him and was forgiven; in prosperity and happiness, he adored his mercy, and was sustained. The disciples were assembled in prayer when the Holy Spirit was shed upon them from above. In prayer they rejoiced after their first sufferings for the name of Christ. With prayer the Apostle of the Gentiles bade adieu to his Ephesian converts. At midnight, in a dungeon, “Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.”

What has been already observed respecting devotion, that it brings us into the presence of God himself, will in a great measure determine the qualifications and sentiments with which we must appear before him. Among these if I do not enumerate an humble and lively faith in the Redeemer, it is not certainly because these feelings are needless or of little moment, but because they are of such universal and vital influence, pervading and sustaining the whole system of religion, that to suppose

them absent, at least in habitual operation and energy, from any the smallest portions of our existence, is to suppose us in the very same degree sinners before God. In every disquisition therefore, respecting a religious act or grace, an humble and entire reliance on the merits of Jesus Christ is necessarily assumed; for without this no act can be religious, no grace exist. Yet these sentiments seem more especially to belong to the exercises of devotion, as acceptable only in the name of that great High Priest who holds the heavenly censer, to whom are presented "the golden vials full of odours."

"Without holiness no man shall see God." To enter then into his presence by prayer, purity of heart, and the absence of all habitual sin, are plainly indispensable. "Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. To sin and to pray are absolute contradictions. If we imagine that we experience the feelings or the pleasures of real devotion while we live in any known habitual sin, we fatally deceive ourselves; they are the fervours of a heated fancy, or the delusions of Satan. It is to the pure alone that God unfolds the gates of the celestial Jerusalem, and appears in beatific vision: "but there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination."

Devotion, then, plainly implies habitual self-examination: for no one can be assured that he does not live in sin, except he watches diligently his



daily conversation. And this is one of the reasons why *piety* is commonly and correctly used as a compendious expression for all the Christian graces. Piety necessarily supposes that wakeful regard to the will of God, in which consists the essence of all religion; for the foundation of moral obligation is universally and for ever the same. The law of the creature is the will of the Creator.

Self-examination precedes prayer;—but it precedes, not merely as a pioneer to remove obstacles, but as a skilful general to prescribe and direct the march. Except we are acquainted by frequent inspection with the state of our hearts and lives, we can neither be assured that we pray acceptably nor that we pray aright. How can we confess sins which we have not discovered? How can we acknowledge mercies which we have never noticed? Unless we know our wants, shall we ask for their needful relief? Unless we are sensible of our dangers, shall we wisely implore assistance? Indeed, devotion in its most perfect exercise, implies not only a watchful observance of our daily dispositions and conduct, but a constant attention to all the dealings and providences of God towards us, and such a general diffusion of religion through the soul, as shall render it quick to understand both the will and the ways of our Heavenly Father. Otherwise we come to prayer without the materials for praying properly. And if it would be thought presumptuous in a subject, to request an audience of his sovereign, without having first considered



well the topics on which he designed to address him, what shall we judge of a sinner who ventures to come before his Maker, wilfully ignorant of those things which should be the subjects of his petitions, the occasions of his thankfulness, or the causes of his most deep humiliation and repentance!

But prayer does not only require previous qualifications; there are dispositions and sentiments still more intimately allied to it, and which should be wrought into its very essence. Three of these deserve to be enumerated.

We must approach God with *Reverence*. Men tremble before their equals, but they are at their ease before God: they fear those who can neither benefit nor hurt them, and they fear not him whose judgment will determine their happiness or misery for ever. Nay, in the opinion of many, to feel much uneasiness or apprehension respecting our spiritual condition, is the mark of a low and pusillanimous spirit. But this is not courage; it is fatuity. Beings more powerful and more daring than men do not judge thus: "the devils believe and tremble." We tremble not as they with a base and servile dread; yet to fear God above all things is one of the chief characteristics of true piety. It is inseparable even from love, according to the measure at least of our ordinary attainments here: though indeed there is a love that "casteth out fear." However, there can be no question that the profoundest reverence, the deepest sense of the Majesty of Him whom we address, ought to accompany every exer-

oise of devotion. These sentiments have nothing in them that is mean or degrading; they are suitable to the relations which connect the creature with his Creator: they are most highly becoming a sinful being towards his offended Judge. They communicate a seriousness, weight, and fervour to our prayers; banishing from our minds every thought that is light or unseasonable. They raise the soul, by filling it with just apprehensions of the most exalted and most excellent of Beings. They impart a sanctity to every thing around us, and place us, as it were, in the midst of a temple “resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations.”

Another quality (or whatever be its just description) indispensable to prayer, is *Earnestness*. Without some measure of earnestness, prayer cannot be; and without a considerable measure, it can scarcely be acceptable; for unless we heartily desire to obtain the things we ask, is it not a mere mockery to implore them at the hand of God? But here is the chief difficulty. We can pray earnestly for any thing which we really wish to possess; but our petitions for spiritual things are apt to be faint, because our desires after them are feeble. If then, we would be serious in our prayers, we must first be serious in our hearts;—we must feel, that the pardon, the favour, and the sanctifying influences of God, are not merely in words, but in very truth and certainty, the greatest of all blessings. Are they not really such? Does there exist in the universe a single being, not irrecoverably depraved, who could lay his hand upon

his heart, and say, that he even doubts of this truth! How is it, then, that we desire so little what we acknowledge to be so excellent? Or can we believe, when our Heavenly Father has opened all the treasures of his goodness to us, that he will not esteem it a high affront if we are still insensible to their value? Let us remember, that our Redeemer has not only enjoined earnestness in prayer, but importunity; and that he has accompanied his command with an assurance that such petitions shall undoubtedly be successful. Prayer is the evidence and expression of the grace we have, as well as the appointed method of procuring what we have not. Whoever therefore rests satisfied with slight and formal devotions, acknowledges that he neither possesses the spirit of real religion, nor desires to possess it. Would any Christian venture to make this profession of his character before men? Is it less alarming to make such a profession of it daily before God?

There is yet another disposition which belongs to prayer, far too essential to be omitted—*Love*. This is the blessed principle which gives to every religious exercise, and more especially to devotion, a grace, an excellence, and a delight, which nothing else can communicate. It is like the “sacred influence” of light in the visible world, which cheers and animates every object, which displays a thousand charms unknown and unimagined, and mingling with them its own radiance, more excellent than them all, awakens a slumbering creation to joy

and life, adoration and praise. If we would find in prayer its full blessing and proper happiness, it is absolutely necessary that we love God fervently. Love includes reverence ; it insures earnestness ; in its vigorous exercise it comprehends or implies every thing that is requisite in prayer. But if love be faint, all devotion languishes ; our spirits are weary, our faith cold, our desires feeble, our thoughts irregular and distracted. Love renders prayer delightful to ourselves, and acceptable to our Maker. It makes us willing to ask, and willing to receive ; deeply sensible of our past mercies, and desirous to obtain more, not only that we may be richer in blessings, but that we may be more deeply indebted to Him who bestows them, and enjoy more abundant manifestations of his perfections and goodness. It makes us sensible of a delightful complacency in the presence of our great Benefactor, and, conforming us in heart and desires to his blessed image, communicates and perfects that filial relation in which the Father of our Lord Jesus delights to regard us, that he may deal with us as obedient children, holy and acceptable in the Beloved.

These are some of the requisites in prayer ; feebly expressed, faintly delineated ; but what hand can adequately pourtray its true excellence ! Of the objects of our devotions, it is not possible to speak with the same precision. We are commanded to ask for spiritual blessings ; we are allowed to supplicate even for temporal mercies. But the nature of our petitions must necessarily vary with our



wants, our dangers, our spiritual knowledge and experience. Some things however there are, so essential that they can never be absent from the devotions of a Christian. Forgiveness of guilt, and protection against temptation, as we always need, we must always implore. Grace to fear God and to love him, grace to watch against sin, and for advancement in holiness, is at least as necessary to the soul, as our daily bread for the body. But the detail of our supplications, and the sources and expressions of praise, no rules can sufficiently prescribe either to ourselves or others. With respect to temporal mercies, some doubtless are very great, and may be innocently and earnestly implored. For these we little need suggestions; we are seldom slow to discern, or forgetful to express them. There are seasons too of difficulty and distress, in which every faithful Christian will fly to the Throne of Grace for relief, support, instruction. But though we are commanded to call on God in the day of trouble, and encouraged even to hope that our prayers for some more special blessings will be heard and granted, it is not, I believe, characteristic of a deep piety or a comprehensive wisdom, to enter ordinarily into much detail and specification in regard to temporal mercies. The greatest derive their excellence chiefly from a connection with spiritual things; and it is better to ask the end than the means. Nor is it possible to live and observe, even for a little while, without discovering, that of all vanities the "vanity of human wishes" is the most strange and



pitiabie. We ask we know not what, and ascertain the kindness and gracious providence of our Heavenly Father, far more frequently in disappointing our desires than in indulging them. The wisdom of the satirist\* is very old, but it was founded on extensive observation; and the lapse of sixteen hundred years has not yet effected any substantial alterations in the character of human desires, or the value of the truths which he inculcated. The general result cannot be better given than in the words of one of our greatest writers:—

Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
 But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice;  
 Safe in his power, whose eyes discern afar  
 The secret ambush of a specious prayer;  
 Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,  
 Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best †.

It is always a matter of some anxiety with Christians, to discover what are the evidences of a state of grace, that they may not deceive themselves in the most important of all inquiries. Various criteria have been proposed; and undoubtedly, as in the natural world it is the union of many qualities which determines an object, and the combination of many dispositions which forms a character, so it is the alliance of many graces which ascertains the Christian. Yet if any one attainment could safely be relied on as a sufficient proof of a truly regene-

\* Juv. 10 Sat.

† Vanity of Human Wishes, cir. fin.

rate spirit, perhaps prayer would be entitled to that pre-eminence;—and this for two reasons, each of which has already incidentally been noticed. First, because it implies habitual watchfulness against sin: secondly, because it has its source in spiritual desires, and is the expression of spiritual affections. It might be dangerous, perhaps, to fix the attention too exclusively on any single virtue: yet surely these considerations furnish the most reasonable motives for endeavouring diligently to grow in this blessed grace; while at the same time, they afford occasion for very anxious solicitude and inquiry, to all who are conscious that their prayers are little better than formal exercises, destitute of those deep feelings and earnest aspirations which give to devotion its true character.

Prayer is a very considerable source of Christian experience. Many of us can remember the time when in reality we never prayed. Most of us, it is to be feared, are conscious of considerable variations in the freedom, the seriousness, and the spirituality of our devotions. These, doubtless, arise in part from the fluctuations of health and spirits. In part too they may not improbably be occasioned (so far at least as respects sensible joy and consolation) by the differing degrees of grace, which are wisely dispensed by our great Redeemer, with reference to our situation and wants, for our discipline and improvement. But by far the most considerable cause of the inequalities in devotion which some too frequently, and perhaps most Christians occa-

sionally, experience, unquestionably is the increase and intrusion of tempers, practices, or pursuits, which are unfavourable to holiness. If the heart is soured by unkindness, or disturbed by the commotion of angry passions, can we be surprised that our prayers are attended with little profit, and no sensible delight? When the waves are swept by a Levanter, will they cease to rage merely because the blue vault above is serene and lovely? If we rise in the morning full of eager projects for our worldly advancement, or lie down at night flurried with the rapture, or jaded by the fatigues, of unprofitable diversions, is it a strange thing to find that our hearts, like our knees, are bowed down to earth; that the incense of devotion is in our hands, but there is no fire to make it stream to Heaven a sweet-smelling sacrifice? Prayer is the touchstone by which our lives are tried. It is the magic signet that changes its colour at the approach of every danger. And these things, in their infinitely varying degrees and shades, are the materials of Christian experience. We become acquainted with the order of God's good providence; with our own corruptions, infirmities, dangers, habits, and necessities. Happy, happy they, in whom the spirit of real devotion is ever increasing; who "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom they are sealed unto the day of redemption;" who observing the ways of their Heavenly Father, and diligently watching their own hearts and lives, "continue instant in prayer;" and find, in its blessed exercises,

an over-flowing spring of life, and strength, and consolation. They are the fruitful, the joyful, the established Christians. Their's are not the wanderings of earthly pilgrims, feeble and way-worn, labouring up the rude mountains, and shrinking beneath the wintry blast. Their's is the march of angels:

On they move

Indissolubly firm; nor obvious hill,  
 Nor straitening vale, nor wood, nor stream divides  
 Their perfect ranks: for high above the ground  
 Their march was, and the passive air upbore  
 Their nimble tread\*.

Prayer is our chief security in seasons of difficulty and temptation. Our lives are not long: compared with the eternity that is opening upon us, they are almost nothing: yet such is our present weakness, that we are seldom able to preserve an equal tenor even through these short portions of existence. Distresses come upon us before we are aware, and find us ill prepared. Past failures render us justly distrustful of ourselves; and our happiest hours are saddened with the thought that perhaps temptations may hereafter arise too powerful for our strength; or a new state of things insensibly turn our minds from spiritual pursuits, and steal from us the little hope and joy we have been labouring to attain. Now, Prayer is that blessed mean by which a correspondence is maintained with

\* Par. Lost, lib. vi.



God himself, and through which spiritual strength and knowledge may always be derived from Heaven, proportioned to our needs. The princess, who by touching a talisman could summon the mightiest Genii to her aid, had little reason to be afraid of her enemies, though otherwise defenceless. A man, who has liberty to draw without limit upon a wealthy friend, will not be apprehensive of want, though his own resources may be scanty. Let us not be fearful. Elijah was faint with his journey, and requested that he might die; but angels brought him food from heaven, and in the strength of that meat he travelled forty days, even to the mount of God. Angels are still "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." God himself is ever present with us, ready to hear our petitions, and able and willing to perform them. How thankful should we be, that he has condescended to appoint a regular medium for communication with him. Only let us cultivate and improve it; let us become acquainted with all the power of prayer, and capable, by active and unremitting exercise, of proving its full energy in the day of our necessity. If this heavenly path be kept open and unobstructed, we may encamp with security, though placed in the midst of our enemies. Our supplies are safe; we are in no danger of discomforture. "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest; for it is thou Lord only, that makest me dwell in safety."

There is yet another consideration which should



peculiarly endear to us the exercises of devotion ;— prayer is our best resource in the hour of affliction. When every other prop of earthly happiness is withdrawn, and our weakness totters under the pressure of increasing and complicated distresses, this heavenly stay is still present with us, still sufficient to sustain us. It seems even probable, that God sometimes permits his servants to suffer under privations, and to witness the destruction of many of their fairest hopes, that they may ascertain the full measure of their spiritual resources, and learn “ what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward them that believe.” All forgetfulness of God involves the guilt of ingratitude ; but methinks there is something peculiarly heartless, and offensive even to our natural sense of justice and generosity, in that fitful and fluctuating piety which can fly to our great Creator and Saviour in the hour of need, yet neglect him in the days of ease and prosperity. Have we then known what it is to suffer affliction ? Have we wandered awhile in the vale of sadness and despondency, crying to God with a faint heart and a feeble voice, hopeless perhaps of succour, yet deprived of every other refuge ? What were then our thoughts ? What would have been our resolutions and promises, had a voice from Heaven offered us deliverance ? Let us measure our obligations to a grateful piety by our own feelings during the season when they were the most just and powerful. Let us think of the astonishment, the very scorn and indignation, with which we should then have

rejected the idea of forgetting Him in prosperity, who was our only help in sorrow. “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?”—Or have our years hitherto flowed on in tranquil happiness? Has our Heavenly Benefactor shed upon us his choicest mercies, and shielded us from the shafts of destruction that are raining so thick around us? Yet let us not be blinded by the sunshine of our happiness. An hour is fast approaching, that will feelingly convince us how frail is the texture of earthly felicity, how unstable the dreams of youth and fancy. Then who will be our refuge? To whom must we raise our eyes for support and consolation? And shall we slight Him in our strength, who will be the only Protector of our weakness? Even in earthly friendships, how dear to us are those who have comforted and sustained us under the pressure of calamities? The affection which has survived prosperity, to which degradation and sorrow have only given new warmth and steadiness; which, like the queen of night, unveils its full beauty when the hours of joy and lustre have passed away, pouring, as it were, a holy light through the damps and darkness of adversity;—such an affection, even in this world, possesses a sanctity which belongs not to common sentiments or seasons: it commands not only gratitude, but veneration, and would involve the being capable of forgetting it in the guilt of sacrilege. Let us transfer the feelings which are familiar to us in our earthly relations, to those higher connections and dependencies to which religion introduces us;

let us give to those sentiments the amplitude and exaltation which they should acquire by being allied to the greatest and the best of Beings; and we shall need no other instructors. The voice of nature, and the dictates of piety, will for once be concurrent; and a just instinct conduct us to truth.

It is long before the mind becomes fully persuaded of the power of Prayer, and the reality of its consolations. Our sensibility in religion, as in social intercourse, is dependent, in some measure, upon the constitutional temperament. Fancy can imitate, with the skill of an enchantress, every impression, sensible or spiritual; and whatever be the persuasion of the presence and agency of God; which is experienced in the happier hours of devotion, it is not unnatural that doubts should afterwards arise; and some apprehension be felt lest we yield ourselves too readily to a delightful illusion. It is probable that the danger of mistake in this, as in other branches of religious knowledge and experience, was intended by our Heavenly Instructor for our discipline and improvement:—to teach us humility; caution; diffidence; to awaken a rational anxiety after truth; to inculcate the necessity of watchfulness; to stimulate and to reward that steady diligence which is one of the best evidences of our sincerity in his service. A hasty persuasion of questionable truths, a rapid and undoubting surrender of the mind to conviction of the highest moment upon slight and disputable evidence, is neither characteristic of a just understanding, nor of

that serious, modest, and somewhat scrupulous temper, which is generally allied to the best graces of Christianity. Yet the reality of those blessed communications which descend in prayer upon the humble and fervent suppliant, is in no manner rendered doubtful by the possibility of mistaking them. These are guaranteed to us by the faithfulness of the Revelation of God; and they have been authenticated, in every age, by the testimony of the most pious and spiritual Christians. Let us earnestly endeavour so “to watch unto prayer,” that we may enjoy also the rational evidence of our own experience. Religion does not merely enjoin duties; it communicates privileges; it imparts blessings. The Apostle of the Gentiles prayed for his converts, “that they might be filled with all joy and peace in believing;—that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” St. Peter appealed to the experience of believers,—“if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” The beloved Disciple declared, “Verily our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” There is a practical conviction of the reality of heavenly things, “a sober certainty of bliss,” which exceedingly differs from that general, though undisputing assent to the great truths of Revelation, with which we are far too willing to rest satisfied. In the ordinary economy of Providence, it is the reward of a diligent inquiry into the will of God, and persevering activity in his service. It is especially the fruit and the reward of Prayer; and if no other duties



or advantages connected themselves with that blessed exercise, this would certainly be sufficient to render it the delight of every experienced Christian. For what can be more truly desirable than to attain to a perception of that light and peace, which in their full measure belong to a higher condition; what more excellent than that occupation which connects the service with the enjoyment of God, the duties of this life, with the glories of a better?



## ON HUMILITY.

THERE is a passage in the Offices of Cicero, where that extraordinary writer is led by the course of his subject to contrast for a moment, the stern and masculine virtues which the Ancients arranged under the head of Fortitude, with those milder graces which they assigned to the class of Temperance. Mee<sup>k</sup>ness, or lowliness of character, was included in this latter description; and the philosopher ventures to express a doubt (though it is only a doubt), whether the decided pre-eminence usually attributed to the class of Fortitude, might not be more questionable than moral writers had been accustomed to imagine.

Truth has in general stolen gradually upon mankind; and, like the day, has been visible in imperfect glimpses and flashes of light before the full orb has appeared above the horizon. What the Roman philosopher faintly saw and timidly suggested, (so faintly that it appears in no sensible measure to have influenced his theories; so timidly that perhaps a similar intimation might be sought for in vain among all his other volumes,) Christianity plainly affirmed, and most distinctly promulgated. And such has been the progress of knowledge in this

department, such is at present the concurrence of opinion among thinking men, that one of the ablest advocates\* of Revealed Religion has enumerated among the characteristic features which establish its Divine Original, the declaration of a truth, which, even in an advanced age of the Heathen learning, Cicero barely ventured to intimate.

Of the virtues which the Ancient Philosophy somewhat slighted, and which Christianity studiously exalts, *Humility* and *Benevolence* are certainly the most considerable; in their nature the most excellent, in their operation the most extensive. To the first of these I propose to devote the present paper; and I may perhaps hereafter find an occasion to offer a few remarks on the second.

The moral character which we now agree in attributing to Humility, does not depend exclusively on the discoveries which Revelation has opened; nor does its value solely rest on the authority of the sacred writings, and the exalted station there assigned to it. This virtue is indisputably a part of Natural Religion. It is a plain result from those truths which were capable of being discovered, as they are plainly demonstrable, without the intervention of miraculous assistance. Every theory, not absolutely atheistical, which admits the existence of a God, and supposes the dependence of the creature on the Creator, necessarily implies the obligation of Humility; of that modest and lowly disposition,

\* Dr. Paley.

which these simple and primitive relations render manifestly becoming in a being such as Man. Whether we consider the immeasurable distance which separates us from the great Author of the universe, or reflect on our absolute dependence upon his bounty : whether we raise our eyes to contemplate the majesty, the power, and the perfections of God ; or direct them within and around us, to trace the vestiges of human weakness, and survey the monuments of human folly ; one sentiment must continually press on every just and reflecting mind ;— a sentiment of self-abasement ; a feeling of imbecility ; a consciousness of unimportance : a deep and growing amazement at the wonders which surround us ; a conviction that God is every thing, and man nothing.

It would have been happy if this truth had been as universally recognized in practise, as it is in theory natural and obvious, The most eminent among the opposers of Revelation have not ordinarily commenced their speculations, wherever they may have ended them, with questioning the existence of God, or the moral government of the universe. These are tenets which the enemies, as well as the advocates of Christianity, have generally treated as indisputable ; and though a few of the hardier and more acute disputants, vexed with the consequences which pressed upon them, or confounded by their own presumption, have ventured ultimately to assail the foundations of all Religion, there can be no doubt that a large majority of those who have re-

jected Christianity, have in all ages admitted the first great articles of our faith—a Deity, and his Providence. Had these men duly considered what are the obligations which even so short a creed involves; had they reflected that Modesty, Docility, and a just Diffidence in our own understandings, are duties as plain and peremptory, even to those who question the truths of Revelation, as to those who admit them; it is highly probable that their enquiries would, in many instances, have conducted them, though by a route somewhat circuitous, into that very path which they despised for its obscurity, and which we believe to be the highway of Truth and Happiness. It is certain at least that such considerations conscientiously regarded, would have destroyed in the birth all those profane and blasphemous writings, which, both in this country and upon the continent, have been the disgrace of the eighteenth century; which have shocked the pious, alarmed the weak, and corrupted the ignorant and unstable. Certainly it would be no mean blessing, could we be deeply persuaded, that Pride, Presumption, and Temerity, whether in speculation or practice, are contrary to our very condition as Men; condemned by every system of Faith, and every theory of Morals: and taking refuge only in that profligate Scepticism which confounds all opinions, all sentiments; and all actions, in one common Chaos.

Nor are these considerations unworthy the attention even of those who profess to be directed by the



highest principles. A frequent contemplation of the majesty and perfections of God has a powerful tendency to humble as well as exalt the mind. If the ordinary emotions of Nature, the pealing Thunder or raging Ocean, the shock of an Earthquake or blaze of a Volcano, are sufficient to fill us with amazement, so that we have need of an effort to collect our scattered spirits, and stand astonished at the sense of our helplessness ; what must be the sensations that will press upon the soul, in approaching that awful Being, whose Word peopled the heavens with unnumbered worlds, and clothed with glory this bright Creation ; whose touch can dissolve in an instant the mighty arch which He erected, and sweep away for ever its glittering fragments, like the memory of a dream that is past ! If the contemplation of the great master-pieces of human art or genius has so affected the minds of men capable of appreciating their excellence, that they have turned away with a mingled sentiment of admiration and despondency\*, what adoring humility, what self-abasement exalted into rapture must touch the soul which becomes familiar with God, the source of all excellence, the mirror of all beauty, the cen-

\* Plato, we are told, gave up all thoughts of excelling in Epic Poetry in consequence of Reading Homer. A young Flemish Painter, of some promise, actually died of despair and mortification on seeing one of the chefs d'œuvres of Raphael. I knew a gentleman of good parts, who intended, at his entry into Parliament, to have spoken frequently, but relinquished the idea after hearing Mr. Pitt.



tre and the end of all perfection! It is probable that those Beings, who, by the dignity of their nature, are placed nearest to the throne of the Almighty, are so penetrated with a sense of their immeasurable distance from the original and self-existing Glory, that they are of all creation at once the highest and the most lowly. The vapours of vanity float only in our earthly atmosphere, they cannot ascend into a pure and ethereal region.

But the chief sources of Christian Humility are certainly to be found in Christian principles. Pride is opposite to our nature as Men; what must it be, then, to our condition as sinners! The Gospel is an offer of free mercy to penitent offenders; but it "pre-supposes the charge of guilt." it opens wide the gates of Salvation to the mightiest and the meanest, to the most amiable and to the most odious; but it exacts from all a conviction and confession of sin as the indispensable terms of admission. Amid the cares and pleasures of life, Christians are apt to forget the nature of their profession, and to contemplate the Gospel practically, (whatever be the creed they acknowledge,) chiefly as an economy instituted for the perfection of Man by the promotion of virtue, overlooking its more peculiar character of a dispensation established and promulgated for the recovery of a fallen race from guilt and condemnation. The consequence of this declension in principles, (from which none are safe who think themselves secure,) is almost always found to be a similar declension in practice. The springs of holy action are

relaxed. Humility more especially, the nurse of every other virtue, sensibly languishes; and, in the place of devotedness to God, and a growing conformity to his will, which are of the very essence of Religion, is substituted a poor, heartless, unprofitable system of life, which is termed decent, only because in this world there are but too many who are interested to keep it in countenance. But the Christian who duly appreciates the greatness of the salvation wrought for him, will be careful not to be too much occupied with the scenes around him, but will often cast his eye backward to survey the region that is behind; he will frequently, and with deep humiliation, consider that he was “by nature born in sin;” that he, like others, was “sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived;” “but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his great mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” What powerful motives to lowliness and self-abasement are suggested by such a passage as this! How are the flattering suggestions of vanity stifled, and the loftiness of presumption dethroned, by the recollection of the condition from which we have been rescued, and the freedom of the mercy bestowed upon us! We have read of some men who, hav-

ing been raised from a mean origin to an exalted station, have carefully preserved memorials of their early distress as the best counsellors of their greatness\*. Let us cherish with equal diligence the remembrance of our first estate, and as we still bear but too many traces of that diseased and miserable condition, let them remind us from whence we have been raised, that, with a deep and growing humiliation of heart, we may receive the bounties of our Creator and Saviour, confessing in our lives as with our lips, that “we are not worthy of the least of all his mercies.”

But it would indeed be happy, if hereditary corruption or early wickedness were the only causes of self-abasement. We are sinners, not merely by the transmission of an evil nature or the imputation of past offences, but by daily and habitual practice. “In many things we offend all.” And though the measure of guilt be exceedingly different according to our respective advances in holiness, and in some, it may reasonably be supposed, no longer very heinous, yet the charge of sin is general, nor are those probably the freest from its pollution who are

\* When Richelieu, in the latter part of his life, was erecting a magnificent palace near the place of his birth, he spoiled the symmetry of the building, for the sake of including in it a part of a very humble mansion in which his youth had been spent. The late Countess Shimmelman, whose husband, from having been a petty tradesman, became one of the first officers of state in Denmark, always kept in her private scrutoire the scales and weights which she had used behind the counter.

the least conscious of its power. The best are naturally the most sensible of their failures, because they have the most lively perception of true excellence: and hence, in part, arises their remarkable humility; as the strongest lights cast the deepest shadows. It seems, indeed, only necessary to have a just view of the holiness of God; in order to feel our own sinfulness. Let us but consider the extent of the law of Love, let us even recollect what have been our own sentiments and convictions; and if the comparison of our daily habits with these standards, does not awaken shame and contrition; it cannot be "because we have performed much, but because we can conceive little." Or if we feel disposed to soften down our errors into imperfections, and plead guilty to deficiencies rather than sins, let us call in aid another consideration. By what power is it that we are preserved from the most flagitious offences? Are we sustained by our own strength? Is it the steady light of Reason that conducts us so safely through the clouds and darkness around us? Is it the holy fire of Spiritual Affection, purifying the air we breathe, and consuming the foul vapours that threaten to extinguish it? Woe were it for the best, if these were his only confidence. They who have known the force of temptation, and felt even for a little while that awful conflict, which many are ordained to feel, between the principles of holiness and the powers of evil, have learned by painful experience a lesson of higher wisdom. They tremble even at the recol-



lection of their dangers; they are deeply sensible of the high import of that solemn admonition; "watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation;" they acknowledge with mingled confusion and thankfulness, that abandoned to their own strength they had perished for ever; and emptied of every vain and lofty thought, they commit themselves in the fulness of faith, to that Almighty Saviour, whose power hath "led captivity captive," whose Spirit hath gone forth "conquering and to conquer. I know not indeed any consideration more calculated than this, to humble the loftiest spirit. We are walking as it were on a single plank over a fathomless precipice. Thousands are falling around us the victims of their temerity, and our own feet are continually failing; a Heavenly Power sustains, a Heavenly arm directs, a Heavenly smile invites us forward. Can we doubt what is the disposition which best becomes our weakness and is the most necessary to our safety?

The blessed Grace which we are contemplating, is recommended to us by another consideration, which to a Christian should be above all others delightful and endearing. It is the temper of mind which our Redeemer has peculiarly invited us to "learn of him." With a simplicity and a dignity which have no parallel, he declared of himself, that "he was meek and lowly in spirit," and he has called on all who hear him, to bow their necks to his gentle yoke, that they may "find rest unto their souls." And shall we not rejoice in the les-



sons of such an instructor? What he has done for us entitles him surely to some regard; his perfect excellence may claim at least a faint imitation. Can we desire to be greater or more honourable than our Saviour? Can we doubt that he well knew how to appreciate and to attain both true greatness and lasting honour? Or be it that he has called us to shame and degradation; to the abandonment of many things we could have desired, and a submission even to some indignities: The path to which we are invited has been trodden by our Redeemer and our God. We walk, as it were, on hallowed earth; every step is consecrated by the memorials of his presence. There is something in the constitution of nature, which to a generous mind makes the renunciation of those things which are commonly desired for the sake of a beloved object, more delightful, as it is far more ennobling, than the satisfaction of possessing them. And such, in a still higher measure, is every sacrifice, even the "loss of all," that we "may win Christ." To partake willingly in his humility and abasement here, while it forms us to a capacity for the highest enjoyments, will afford, I am persuaded, the truest foretaste of the happiness prepared for us in the participation of his glory hereafter.

Excepting Love, which is "the fulfilling of the Law," Humility is perhaps the most comprehensive of all the Christian graces. It resembles indeed that first of virtues, in this striking peculiarity, that, diffusing its influence in different directions, it em-

braces the relations which connect us both to God and to man, With reference to our Heavenly Benefactor it implies the feeling acknowledgment of our guilt and unworthiness; filial Reverence and Fear; an entire reliance upon the merits of our Saviour; a willing Submission to the dictates and impressions of the Spirit; Patience under God's fatherly chastisements; perfect Resignation to his holy will. In respect to Man, it supposes a Readiness to yield the superiority to others, and an Inclination to believe them to be wiser and better than ourselves; a hearty Indifference both for ourselves and our families, to the possession of rank, station, honours, wealth, and whatever is allied to worldly consequence and applause; Meekness under every provocation; Contentment in every condition. Humility is in truth the expression of many heavenly graces; like that original white in the natural world, which includes in its composition the other colours, and is itself the purest of them all.

It cannot reasonably surprize us, that a temper so excellent as this, should in general be acquired rather slowly, and seldom be found on earth in its perfect state. The Teachers of Religion have always complained of the difficulty they experience in persuading men thoroughly to renounce all self-righteousness, and receive the offers of free grace as unworthy sinners; and it is probable that this repugnance to the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, has been the reason why some have been too apt to consider the acceptance of those truths, as alone de-

cluding the character, and comprehending almost the whole of Religion. Yet without questioning in any degree the indisposition of men to the reception of these truths, it may reasonably be doubted whether that branch of Humility which respects our fellow-creatures, is not practically the most difficult of attainment. God is so excellent, and man in his own nature so evil, that it is really astonishing that the doctrine of Salvation by free grace should find much opposition; it is as if one tottering under a palsy, or sinking under an atrophy, should refuse cordials from a confidence in the strength of his constitution. Submission also to the Divine authority is powerfully taught, by that necessity which none can resist, and of which all are conscious; and it is the less offensive to us, because between man and his Maker there can be no semblance of equality. But when we descend to the field of earthly competitions, the character of the question alters. Here we are surrounded by thousands who are only a little stronger or weaker a little more knowing or more ignorant than ourselves. We act with beings of whom many are proud, and vain, and selfish, and unreasonable, and unfeeling. We see artificial distinctions allied to natural imbecility, and powerful qualities debased by vice. All these things dispose us to sustain with some jealousy our claims to consideration; and unhappily we have the example of multitudes, acting as if nothing was insupportable but the want of worldly consequence. It is no easy matter to resist entirely

the contagion of such a distemper. Yet the renunciation of lofty thoughts and projects, is but the first lesson of Christian meekness. What self-denial, what self-discipline are necessary before we acquire that fine edge and temper of soul, which can resist the sharpest provocations; that benign humility which receives an affront and a courtesy almost with equal sweetness? How spiritual, how holy, how elevated must be that mind, which can contemplate exaltation and obscurity, poverty and riches, with an equal aspect; or rather which can prefer the conditions which others fear, because they are most congenial to the character and most favourable to the cultivation of a true lowliness. Perfect Humility is perfect disinterestedness; the annihilation of every selfish desire, imagination, and action. It is the foundation and best ally of true Benevolence, banishing all those anxieties and competitions which obstruct the diffusion of affectionate sentiments; opening every source of Love, and giving it to flow around in a full and tranquil stream of benignant happiness.

Yet let not the extent and perfection of this grace tempt us to suppose that it is unattainable, or that few can be expected to aspire to such a height in Holiness. A considerable measure of true Humility is essential to the very existence of Religion; nor have we any solid reason for believing that it is possessed even in the smallest degree, except there is a hearty desire to possess it in the greatest.



Let us consider also how greatly this blessed disposition is honoured by the word of God himself. It was the temper of mind which our Saviour selected, as it were, out of all the graces which adorned his character, and proposed for the imitation of his followers. It is that which has been exalted and consecrated by the peculiar testimony of Jehovah. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity; I dwell in the high and holy place;—with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit." The loftiest flight of ambition is up to the thrones of Princes; its widest range is the admiration of a few of the perishing generations of men: But humility is honoured by the presence of the King of Kings; by His approbation and applause who is from everlasting to everlasting.

It is not unimportant to observe that the Lowliness of mind which is inculcated by the Gospel, should never either in character or speculation, be separated from that perfect confidence in our God and Saviour, to which it is most naturally allied. In itself it is undoubtedly a principle of abasement, not of exaltation; of submission, not of energy; it rather neutralizes what is evil in man, than animates to action his nobler faculties and powers: so that in its solitary influence some colour might be afforded for the old reproach of Infidelity, that Christians are a groveling low-spirited race, unfit for the efforts and collisions of busy life. But Humility united to Faith, assumes a very different character. Like



the fair wanderer in that sublime \* Allegory, which has so aptly shadowed out both the ruin and renovation of our nature, she derives strength and courage from her heavenly Companion, and by his side is fearless in the midst of danger. In the Christian warfare, we cast away indeed our idle cumbrous ornaments, our robes and plumes and flowery chaplets; but it is only that we may be sheathed in immortal armour;—that “we may take to ourselves the shield of Faith, the helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.”

But it is not only to Faith that Humility should be found allied. If a new principle is furnished in the place of those eager and lofty passions which Religion overthrows, new resources also are supplied as a compensation (they are far more than a com-

\* There can be little doubt that in the story of Cupid and Psyche, (probably the most ancient of all Fables) the history of the Fall of Man and of his recovery, has been preserved. *Psyche* (the Greek term for the *Soul*) is first wedded to *Heavenly Love*. She incurs his displeasure through a guilty curiosity; and is immediately separated from the source of her happiness. A long pilgrimage is enjoined her, during every part of which she is exposed to great danger from a variety of enemies. But an unknown friend always attends and protects her. She is often tempted to desert him, and soon finds herself in the most imminent peril. Happily he has watched her steps, and in recovering his help she regains her safety. At length, after many sufferings and fears, Psyche arrives safely at the destined goal, and while she waits in trembling hope for the promised reward, her faithful champion, throwing aside his disguise, appears in immortal beauty, the Divine Lover whose forgiveness and favour she had so long desired.

pensation) for the enjoyments which she forbids. Vanity doubtless has its charms. Pride and Ambition are among the most powerful stimulants of human life. If Lowliness were found in abstraction from the other Christian graces, it might produce perhaps a neutrality of character, little favourable to happiness, though friendly to virtue. But the Christian is like the Apostle "as having nothing, yet possessing all things." As self preference diminishes, Love to God and Love to man increase, and supersede it. There is no void in the heart; no lassitude or listless apathy, such as the votaries of a false gratification even in this world often experience. All is animated and active, all is equal and serene.

Sophron was well descended, and born to the inheritance of a considerable estate. He was endowed by his creator with a comprehensive understanding, and he was still more highly favoured by having early received those deep religious impressions which were afterwards visible in the whole system of his life and conversation. Christianity indeed was the very element in which he lived, and with which every thing in his sentiments and conduct was connected: and of all the graces of Christianity which gave a lustre to his character, Humility was perhaps the most eminent. It was curious to observe how it influenced, in a manner more or less direct, his opinions, his manners, his connections, his studies; and even his general plans of life and prudential arrangements. Sophron had studied Religion deeply

for himself, for he early felt that it involved consequences far too momentous to be hazarded on the authority of others. But he brought to the consideration of that subject, a seriousness of mind, and a diffidence in his powers, suited to its magnitude. As his knowledge increased, as he became better acquainted with God and with himself, he discovered, not without surprize, how ill answerable had been his early life to the obligations justly imposed upon him; how many hours had been wasted in thoughtlessness or self indulgence; how often he had sinned with little observation or compunction; how unworthy and unprofitable were his best days; how unstable and ineffective his best resolutions. Convinced of sin, and sensible of his exceeding weakness and corruption, he learned to cherish more and more deeply the great doctrines of Grace. He felt them to be his only hope and true consolation. He clung to them with increasing affection, as he advanced in holiness; and he breathed out his soul in committing and commending himself as a miserable sinner to the unmerited mercy of his Redeemer. Sophron "walked humbly with his God."—But he was humble also in his deportment towards men. Few had been more discursive in their inquiries than Sophron, and none probably had more fully weighed, or more patiently and accurately investigated, all truths connected with the conduct and duties of life. Yet it was observable, that the firmness with which he held the opinions which chiefly influenced his actions, was so wholly remote from all dogmatism in

affirming them, and from all heat and vehemence when obliged to defend them, that the more eager advocates of the same sentiments, were apt to be displeased at his moderation, and would sometimes complain that the interests of Truth were hurt by his concessions. But it was plain to any attentive observer, that Sophron's candour had no alliance with scepticism; for those very sentiments which in description he stated cautiously, and maintained with meekness and even diffidence, were the foundations upon which his whole system of practical conduct had been erected, on the solidity and safety of which his hopes and his happiness rested. But Sophron had noticed that the colours in which truth is presented to us, vary greatly according to the circumstances which attend it: he had not forgotten that many opinions which were originally adopted with some deliberation, a maturer experience had obliged him to alter or modify; he had often observed that men generally are most vehement about those dogmas which they have embraced hastily, or upon mere authority, supplying by passion what is deficient in reason. He considered that the certainty of our knowledge is limited, not only by the weakness of our faculties, but by the imperfect state of the observations or experiments on which it is founded; he knew that the understanding is powerfully influenced by the character, and thought therefore that modesty in our own judgments, and candour towards others, are peculiarly to be expected from those who feel and willingly acknowledge the



extent of their moral corruptions and infirmities. Sophron's manners were impressed with the same modest dignity and gentle wisdom which breathed through his whole character. To his inferiors he was courteous and attentive, without the least appearance of condescension. In truth he was not apt to think any one his inferior, merely because his station in life was humble; and generally behaved to men of sense and piety, with a respect more visible and more flattering, than that which he bestowed on the highest titles. Yet to his superiors he was never deficient in a becoming deference, and his unembarrassed politeness sufficiently shewed, how far he was from feeling any thing like umbrage, or a sense of littleness in their presence. He used frequently to say, that Politeness was a virtue, and that he thought religious persons should never be defective in a quality which was allied both to benevolence and humility. Indeed Humility was in a great measure the source of the kindness and courtesy which rendered him so amiable; for entertaining a very low opinion of himself, he generally found some reason or other for treating those whom he conversed with as his superiors; and entertaining not the least desire of distinction, he was not tempted to depreciate any, or to disturb their just claims to consideration. In the same way, Humility was in Sophron the foundation of one of the most perfect tempers ever witnessed. It was almost impossible to make him angry. If he was ill-treated (which happened rarely) the first thought



which occurred to him was, that he must certainly have done something amiss ; and if the hostility shewn to him was manifestly quite unprovoked, he would discover so many excuses for what at first seemed perfectly inexcusable, that the offending party appeared almost to be a gainer by his misconduct ; so that those who knew him intimately would observe, that next to enjoying his friendship, the most desirable thing was to be his enemy.

ON THE  
EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

THIS Epistle is addressed by St. Paul to the Philippians in his own name and in the name of Timotheus. It is probable that this association of Timothy with himself, was owing to the peculiar modesty and liberality of the Apostle, who, though he was alone invested with a general authority over the Gentile converts, and claimed so to be when the occasion required, was so far from being unnecessarily jealous of his dignity, that he was willing, in the eyes of the Philippians and others, to share it with the faithful partner of his labours and sufferings. The authority however of this Epistle, is not in any manner diminished by the circumstance last mentioned, for though it is addressed to the Philippians in the name both of Paul and Timotheus, the former is evidently the writer of it, and speaks throughout in his own proper person.

Paul and Timotheus are entitled “the servants of Jesus Christ.” This was the highest character the Apostle wished to assume. The high commission with which he was entrusted, the ample authority with which he was invested, seemed to him to confer no dignity proportioned to that of being the “Servant of Christ.” It was not merely hu-

mility that led him thus to think. It was rather a comprehensive wisdom, and a just knowledge of things, which enabled him to estimate them as they truly are; and which shewed him, that to be subject to the governance, and to execute the commands of his ever-blessed Redeemer, was an employment more truly and permanently glorious, than the possession of the highest earthly office.

The Epistle is directed to the Saints or holy persons in Christ Jesus at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons. This expression seems to have been used by the Apostle as synonymous with the words "Church and Churches," which we find in the beginning of other Epistles. Holiness is so indispensable a consequence of the Christian profession, that the Apostle employs the word "Saints" in this and other places as having the same import with "Believers," or "Church," that is, a congregation of Believers; thereby plainly intimating, that they who were not holy, whatever name or profession they might assume, were in truth not Christians, neither members of the Church, nor true Believers. At the same time, it appears from the manner in which the Apostle usually addressed himself to Churches at large, that he thought it right to presume, in charity, that those who called themselves by the name of Christ, were really such as they professed to be.

*Grace* and *Peace* are the blessings which St. Paul, in the introduction of most of his Epistles, prays to be bestowed on those whom he addresses.

They seem to imply that favourable regard of the Almighty, which will secure to us the communication of his spiritual mercies, and that tranquillity of soul, which naturally arises from a perception of such mercies, and from an attendant sense of our effectual reconciliation to God through Christ Jesus. They are the natural, and it may even be said, the necessary accompaniments of true Religion; its evidence, its fruits, and its reward. They grow immediately out of the great doctrine of justification by the death and merits of our Redeemer; the cordial acceptance of which, united with that entire abandonment of sin which belongs to it, places us in a relation to the great Author of all things, which carries with it the inestimable assurances of Grace and Peace: assurances as effective and necessary to the advancement of sanctification in our hearts, as they are to our happiness; for it is scarcely possible for us to love God with our whole hearts, while we believe that he entertains sentiments of hostility towards us; or to submit cheerfully and entirely to his will, till we have at least a lively hope that it is consistent with our final good, and may tend to promote it.

If the Apostle so frequently prays for grace and peace in behalf of his Christian converts, we too, may well offer up the same petition for ourselves and for others. And while we beseech the Father of all goodness to increase upon us these spiritual blessings, let us not be insensible to his peculiar and amazing mercy, in having brought us to that state,

and bestowed on us that religious light, to which alone they can belong. Men, who are sinful by nature, and still more sinful by habit, could not possibly, in their natural condition, enjoy any reasonable hope of possessing the favour of God, a being of perfect holiness; and without his favour, what is there that could afford to a reflecting mind any lasting tranquillity? Even if, in his abundant mercy, he had found a way for our pardon and reconciliation, still, unless he had so graciously communicated to us this joyful intelligence, how sad and cheerless, how full of doubt and darkness must have been our condition here. What misgivings, what inquietude, what agitating apprehensions would have harassed our happiest days; what a deep and awful gloom would have hung over the bed of death! When the friends to whom our hearts had been allied through life by gratitude and affection were called away, how little consolation could we have found in the bright hope of being again united to them in happier regions! And when we, in our turns, were preparing to follow them, would not the kind attentions and sympathy of those who survived, have awakened in our hearts at that awful moment, a pang almost as bitter as their neglect? Far different is our present condition. The knowledge of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, has destroyed the fear of death, by opening a scene of joy and triumph beyond it, which the warmest imagination, unenlightened by divine truth, could not have conceived. The veil has been drawn up



which separated us from eternity, and that glorious light which shines with unclouded brightness in the heavenly kingdom, can reach even this lower world, and shed a mild and cheerful influence upon our vale of darkness.

Among the many spiritual feelings and affections which appear to have animated the heart of the Apostle, none seems to have been more constant, more wakeful, or more lively, than Gratitude to God for his abundant and never-failing mercies. This disposition of mind is visible in all the writings of St. Paul. He seems to have been ever on the watch to observe indications of the bounty of Providence, and his feelings instantly responded. He appears to have lived in a state of continual thankfulness; and when we consider that the whole of his life, from the hour of his miraculous conversion to his martyrdom, was but one unvaried scene of pain, weariness, contradiction, and persecution, how fervent must have been that faith, how highly spiritual and heavenly that temper of mind, which could triumph so entirely over all the ordinary feelings of humanity, and overflow with the most ardent gratitude, in the midst of those sufferings which are apt too often to depress and sour the finest dispositions! Natural sweetness of temper is one of the qualities which in this world is most universally valued. And it is justly valued. But who has ever known or heard of a temper so perfect, as to be able, in its own resources only, to sustain such a series of provocations, labours, and

sufferings, as St. Paul endured through a long course of years? It is the grace of God, the strength and peace imparted by Him who is most truly entitled the Spirit of hope and consolation, that can alone form the soul to so heavenly a state, that, like the finest steel, it shall only become more firm and perfect in the intense heat of the furnace, and conflict the hardest and roughest substances without losing its edge. Nothing distinguishes so certainly that true benignity of soul which belongs to the established Christian, from a natural cheerfulness, facility, and gentleness of disposition, as its power to resist the shocks and trials of adversity. Many, whose sullen or sarcastic natures now excite a general dislike, were once gay and cheerful, and even admired for those very qualities of which they appear to be so destitute. The fault probably was not so much in the original cast of their dispositions, as in an habitual disregard of those means, which are alone effectual to bestow a settled complacency and benevolence of heart. The condition of such persons is indeed most melancholy. Every thing within, and every thing around them, is gloomy; for the same passions which alienate others are a torment to themselves. We should be exceedingly careful not to increase the distress of such persons, by yielding to those feelings of irritation or dislike, which we are apt to experience when exposed to their infirmities. But let the example of St. Paul teach us a lesson of still higher value:—that Religion, where it is really vi-

gorous, is a remedy against every temptation, and every sorrow. He was a man of strong passions and the most acute sensibility; and the trials to which he was exposed, were such as perhaps no one, except our blessed Redeemer, ever supported. Did they render him gloomy, desponding, irritable, or severe? Read his writings. Every page breathes hope, and joy, and love, tranquillity, gratitude, and confidence. Does religion produce in our hearts the same dispositions and feelings? If not, it is not the religion of St. Paul; it is not the religion of Christ. There is something erroneous or defective.

There is another point of view, in which the gratitude of St. Paul well deserves to be contemplated. It is quite manifest, that such thankfulness under such afflictions, must have had its foundation in the deepest humility. Nothing tries the state of the heart more closely than affliction. A proud man, (and we all are in some degree proud by nature,) has but little sense of the goodness of God in the mercies he bestows, for they seem but the proper recompense of his merits; and if he falls into misfortunes, it is to be feared, unless they reform the heart, they will harden it; for we are naturally averse to those who cause us to suffer, and unless our sufferings produce reflection, repentance, and humility, there can be no doubt that this principle of our nature will operate, even where the author of our punishment is God himself. It is highly probable that the malignity of evil spirits is

owing in a considerable measure to this cause. But the sentiments of the Christian in distress are of an opposite kind. He knows that he has sinned greatly against his Creator and sovereign. He knows that he has merited none of the bounties and blessings which he enjoys, but far more than the whole of the severest pains to which he is subjected. He knows that God is both righteous and merciful: that he chastens his servants from no cruel or angry motives, but because it is needful that his government be sustained, and his glory vindicated; because too, chastisement will both contribute to work the reformation of the offender, and to warn him against future sins: he knows that the most favoured of the children of God, have been subjected during their earthly pilgrimage to heavy trials and afflictions; and he knows too, that there is an inheritance of endless and unspeakable felicity prepared for those who patiently endure unto the end; "that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The true Christian bows humbly under the hand of God. It requires however, an exceedingly deep sense of our guilt and demerits, to be really thankful in suffering; because our natural feelings are powerful, and though at another moment we might be willing to acknowledge our true deserts, human infirmity is apt to disturb and shake in the hour of trial, even our most reasonable convictions. The example however, of the blessed Apostle, may well excite us to



aspire to a temper of mind, which will render us (through the ever present help of the Holy Spirit,) superior to all the inclemencies of this stormy region. That such a temper is exceedingly to be desired, no Christian certainly will doubt; that it is attainable, the history and writings of St. Paul, even if no other example could be found, might sufficiently assure us. Of such a temper Humility is the first principle; the low but sure foundation on which the whole moral edifice must be erected.

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## ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted by our Saviour Jesus Christ, just before he laid down his life upon the cross for the sins of all mankind. He commanded his disciples to celebrate this Sacrament through all ages, as a memorial of his love to us, and his sufferings for us, and as a means of obtaining grace and help from God to do his will. It cannot therefore be habitually neglected without great sin, and very imminent danger of losing all the benefits which Christ died to purchase for us.

But some are afraid to come to this Sacrament,



because they think they are unworthy. Whoever lives in the wilful practice of any sin, or habitually neglects Religion, is undoubtedly unworthy; and he had better not approach the table of the Lord. But all such persons should remember, that the sins and negligence which make them unfit to partake of this Sacrament, will, as sure as the word of God is true, at the great day of Judgment bring upon them the wrath of God, and their final condemnation; unless they quickly repent with all their heart, and ask forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ, and endeavour to do the will of God sincerely. But whoever thus repents with his whole heart, and strives to do the will of God, not only may come safely to this holy Sacrament, but is particularly invited and directed by God so to do, as the means of obtaining his forgiveness, and strength to resist temptation for the time to come. And all who thus with sincerity repent and put their trust in Christ Jesus our Saviour, and endeavour heartily to please God by obeying his laws, will assuredly, when this short life is ended, be made partakers in Heaven of happiness unspeakable and everlasting.

So that in fact the whole difficulty comes to this: are we sincerely endeavouring to learn and to do the will of God; or are we wilfully living in neglect of Him? Let every man ask himself honestly this question. He can certainly answer it if he will. If we have repented truly of all our past sins, and are striving with all our hearts to please God,

putting our whole trust in his mercy through Christ Jesus, we are in no danger of partaking unworthily of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If we have not repented truly of our past sins, and are not endeavouring to serve God with all our hearts, we are right to be afraid of approaching the Sacrament. But then it is of the greatest possible importance, to repent quickly, and change our ways; in the full assurance, that every repenting sinner will be pardoned by God for the sake of Jesus Christ; but that every unrepenting sinner, though he may prosper here for a little time, will undoubtedly perish for ever.

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